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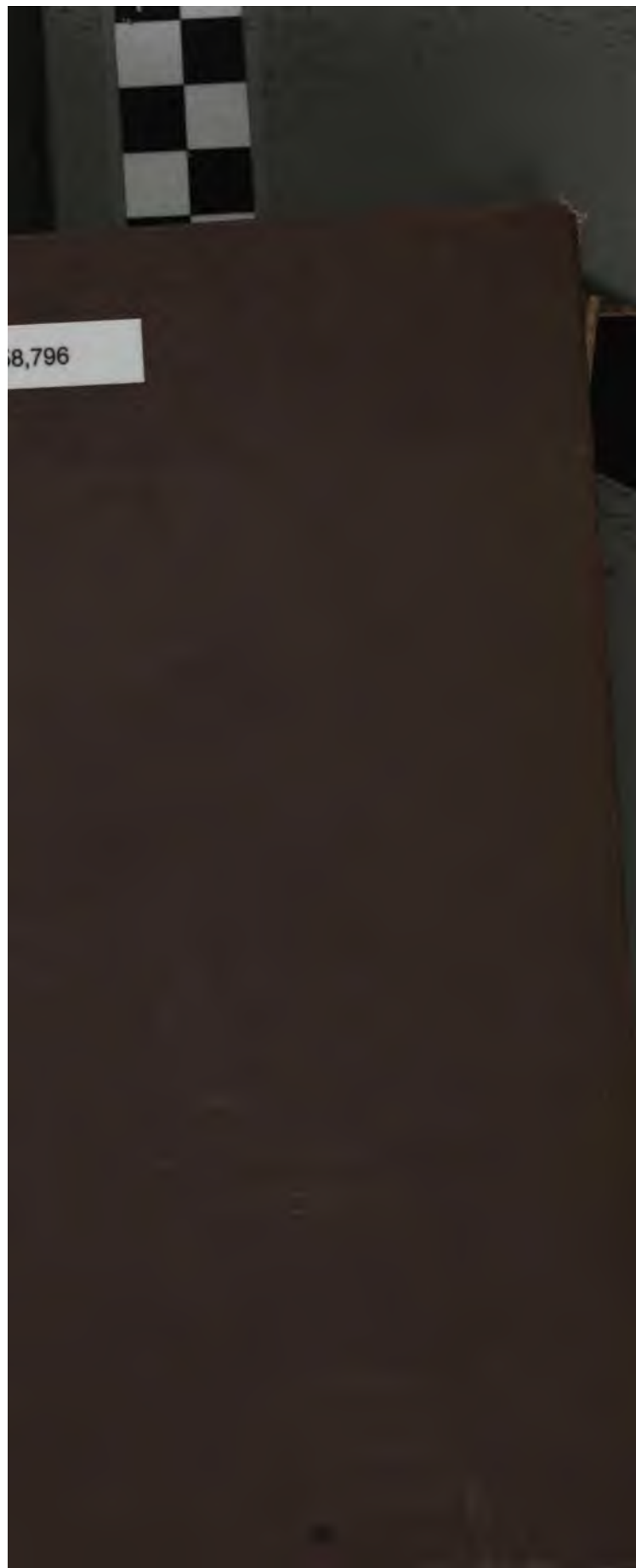
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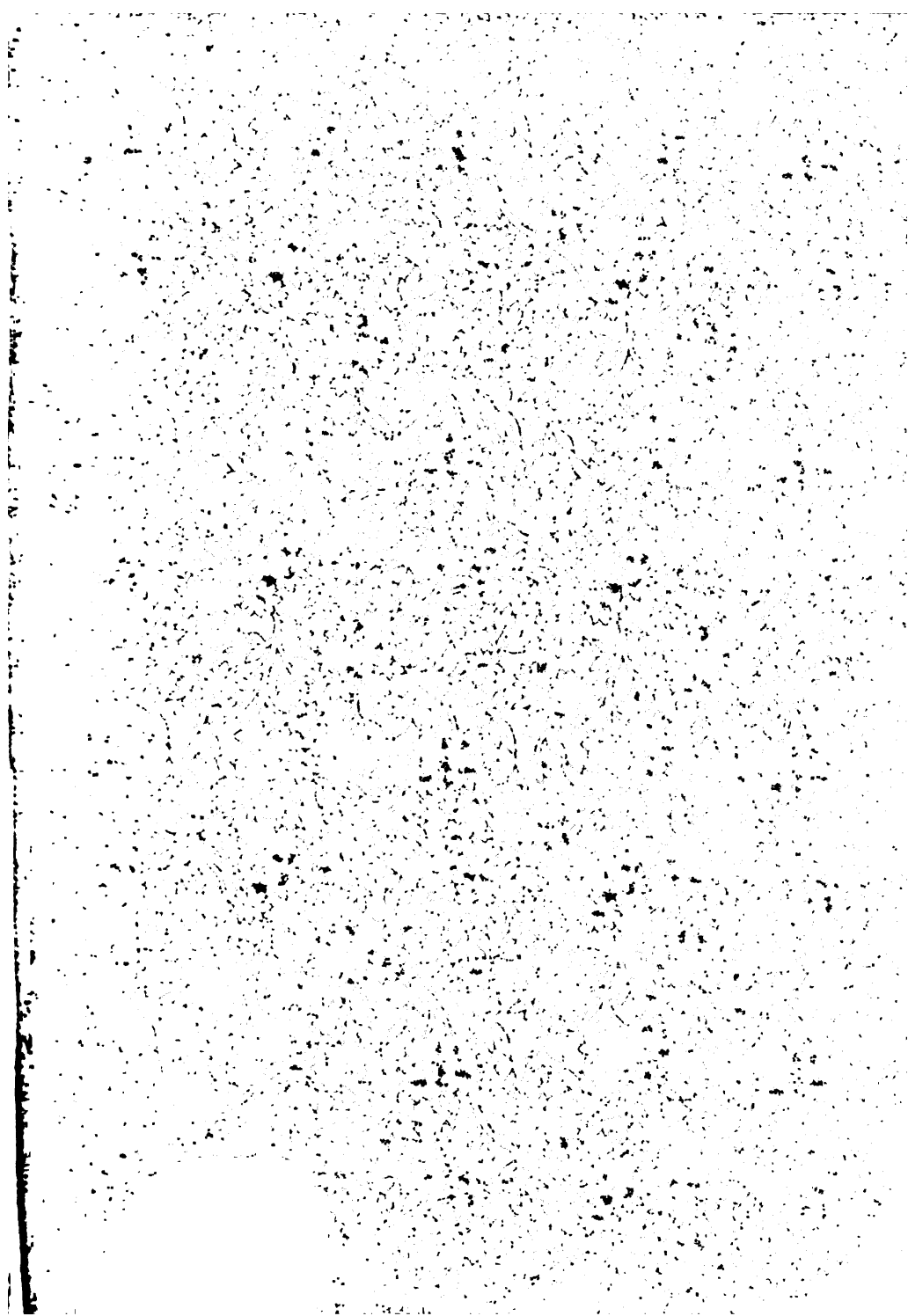
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*William and Mary
mother*

1884

LECTURES ON PAINTING

DELIVERED TO THE STUDENTS OF THE ROYAL
ACADEMY

BY



EDWARD ARMITAGE, R.A.



NEW YORK
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
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PREFACE.

THESE Lectures are a selection from those delivered by me to the students of the Royal Academy during the term of my professorship,—that is, between the years 1876 and 1882.

I have limited the selection to twelve, partly to keep the book of a modest size, and partly because many of the omitted lectures (and especially those which treat of the great masters of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries) would hardly be comprehensible without the numerous engravings with which they were illustrated at the time of delivery.

I ought, perhaps, to apologize for the roughness of my explanatory diagrams, but as they only aspire to represent the rude sketches done with white chalk during the actual delivery of the lectures, let us hope they will be leniently dealt with.

It is a common practice with writers who are not yet hardened offenders, to seek some excuse for rushing into print, and the excuse usually offered is the “urgent entreaty of valued friends.” I certainly cannot avail myself of this customary but I fear often uncandid plea.

My only reason for publishing must be looked for

in the large and very attentive audiences I have always had. This evident appreciation of my teaching by the Royal Academy students, has led me to think that some of these lectures might be interesting and instructive to other students outside the Academy, and possibly even to those who do not intend to follow art as a profession, but who would be glad to have a little daylight thrown on a subject which, though much written and lectured about of late years, does not seem to have been often treated in a simple, practical manner.

At the same time I am fully aware that the practical part of drawing can only be learned by real work ; and I am also inclined to believe that a knowledge of the old masters and their various schools is better acquired by frequent visits to galleries where their works can be seen, than by second-hand description from a lecture.

In my opinion, the special duties of a professor and lecturer on Art ought to be, first, the general pilotage of the schools through the quicksands and mud-banks with which the deep-water channel leading to excellence is beset on every side ; and, secondly, the alimentation of that subtle flame without which the architect degenerates into a builder, the sculptor into a statuary, and the painter into a handicraftsman.

E. A.

February, 1883.



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Lectures on Painting.

LECTURE I.

ANCIENT COSTUMES.

I DO not purpose in this lecture to enter much into detail. Such a course would indeed be impossible, without having a large collection of costumes at hand to explain and illustrate my meaning as I go on. I may attempt something of this kind in a future year, but my object to-night is to make a few general observations on the dress of the ancients.

I will begin with the ancient Jews, from Noah downward. We have no pictorial record of the dress of the patriarchs; we have therefore no fixed data to guide us. We may, however, safely assume that a straight-cut under-garment was commonly worn; that a long, ample drapery or cloak was thrown over the shoulders; and that the head was protected from the sun by a cloth, or possibly by some kind of skull-cap. Turbans are essentially Mahometan, and the painters of the Flemish and Dutch schools were certainly wrong in representing Abraham with a turban.

The costume I have suggested as appropriate to

the patriarchal age is identical with the dress of the modern Arabs, and there is no doubt that, if not identical, it really was very similar. I think, however, that in painting Biblical subjects we ought to be careful not to carry the similitude too far. I see no objection to clothing Ishmael or any of the tribes of the desert like modern Arabs ; but the Jews, even in the time of Abraham, were a peculiar people, and we may very well suppose that they would modify their dress in such a manner as would distinguish them from the wandering and predatory tribes.

Besides, there is always a danger, in dressing Abraham or Jacob like an Arab chieftain, of importing into your picture that familiarity which breeds contempt. It has often been done in modern times, but I cannot say I approve of this easy way of solving the difficulty.

I should put the cloak on differently to what the Arabs do. I should avoid the camel's-hair cord which encircles the head, and thus, whilst preserving the simplicity of that early period, my patriarchs would not be mistaken for modern Arabs.

The women of remote Jewish antiquity, the Sarahs, the Rebeccas, etc., should be clothed in similar simple garments. Whatever may be said in favor of dressing the men like Arabs, it would never do to introduce the female Arab fashions into Biblical pictures. Their dress is peculiarly Mahometan.



The women of the patriarchal age wore long straight-cut robes, longer than those of the men, gathered round the waist by means of a cord or narrow sash. They would have a cloth on their heads, falling a long way down the back ; and the young women would probably have their arms bare.

The ancient Jews certainly wore sandals (or shoes, as they are translated in our version of the Bible). These sandals were worn out-of-doors only, and consisted most likely of a rude leather sole, fastened to the foot and ankle by means of ligatures made of skin.



I will now pass on to the costumes of Assyria and ancient Egypt.

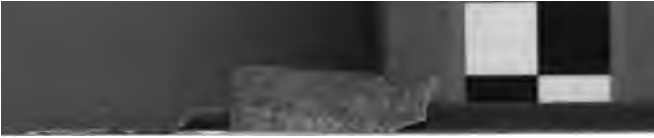
If we were to take literally the sculptured bas-reliefs of Nineveh, and the numerous wall-paintings of Egypt, we should come to the conclusion that the dress of those ancient peoples was of a very stiff, formal character. Such, however, was probably not the case. The stiffness and formality noticeable in these works is due rather to the want of skill in the sculptors than to the fashions of the period. In the Nineveh sculptures we notice everywhere the hair and beards of the kings arranged in symmetrical curls, which would lead one to suppose that these monarchs must not only have had beards of a very peculiar nature, but must have spent a great deal of time under the hands of the barber.

On further examination, however, we find that the manes of the lions are treated in the same way, and hence we conclude that these regular, basaltic-looking curls were merely the artist's conventional way of representing crisp or knotted hair. The heavy fringes of the foldless dresses must be interpreted in the same way. We learn from them that Assyrian kings, priests, and high officials *did* wear fringes to their dresses, but it does not follow that these fringes were like those of a drop-curtain, or that the dresses were tight and uncomfortable.

The peculiar-shaped hat is probably very much like what really *was* worn. Something of the sort is still to be found in Persia and on the Indian frontiers.

In treating of ancient Egyptian costume we must, in the same way as with Assyrian, make a liberal allowance for the imperfections and mannerisms of the art of the period. There is no doubt that the square shoulders and narrow hips of the Egyptian figures were not pure inventions of the artists. The peculiarity has often been noticed in ancient mummies and skeletons. The artists doubtless exaggerated and embellished what was possibly thought a beauty, just as we see more modern artists exaggerating the human form in another direction.

The heavy fringes and tassels of the Assyrians seem to have been unknown in Egypt. The male costume is generally very simple and even scanty.



A cloth, about two feet wide, wound single round the waist so as to allow the hips and thighs to be covered, with the end brought from behind between the legs, and tucked in to the waist, is in most cases the only covering. Besides this garment, there is often a close-fitting kind of bodice with straps or braces over the shoulders. Of shirts and tunics there are a few examples cut in the Greek fashion, but these probably belong to a much later period than the time of the Pharaohs.

We must not, however, argue that because we have no satisfactory representation of these undergarments that therefore they did not exist. We read in Genesis, that Pharaoh arrayed Joseph in vestures of fine linen, and there is abundant evidence elsewhere that the rich Egyptians wore not only fine linen under-clothing, but rich mantles also.

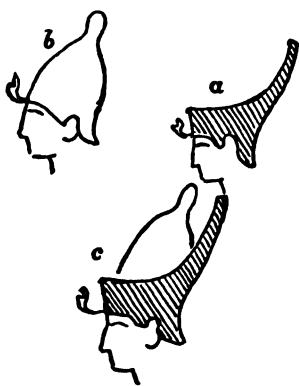
The women in the ancient Egyptian paintings are represented in an impossibly tight dress descending to the ankles, but as no female could either walk or sit down in such a garment, we must suppose that the painters of the period did not know how to represent folds and therefore adopted this short and easy way of indicating clothing. This is evidently a case where it would be absurd to follow literally the old authorities. According to Herodotus, this robe was the only garment of the ancient Egyptian women, but there are indications on many of the bas-reliefs that some kind of thin tunic or under-garment was also worn.

Most of the women in the ancient paintings, however, have no clothing above the waist ; but the neck and shoulders are adorned with a number of necklaces, and we notice over the shoulders the same kind of bands I have already mentioned in speaking of the men's dress.

Of course, if you have a Cleopatra to paint, you may allow yourselves a great departure from the scantiness of the ancient wardrobe.

The Roman fashions were in Cleopatra's time grafted on the Egyptian, and there are plenty of sculptures of the time of Adrian representing Egyptian priestesses, sacrifices, and processions, which give ample materials for dressing Cleopatra and her attendants, both male and female.

The most singular and striking feature in the costume of the ancient Egyptians is the head-gear.



This takes the most fantastic and extraordinary shapes. Many of these queer head-coverings are royal crowns. Thus, *a* was the crown of Lower Egypt, and was of a red color ; *b*, of Upper Egypt, and white ; *c*, the crown of the two countries united, which union took place about 3000 years B.C.

Some of these singular forms are doubtless heraldic imitations of flowers and feathers.

It is probable also that many of them are mere symbols and were never worn.

The rather hackneyed bird head-dress was peculiar to the queens of Egypt, and this, like the male crowns, was never worn except on state occasions. Thus it would be incorrect to give Pharaoh's daughter the bird head-dress. If she had a right to it at all, she would not wear it when going out to bathe with her attendants. She would probably have a kind of veil fastened round her head with an ornamental band, but she would no more think of putting on the insignia of royalty than our Queen would dream of wearing her crown when taking a drive in the Highlands.

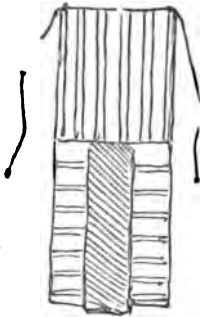
The Egyptian men shaved their heads, and commonly wore either a skull-cap or the well-known cloth which we find everywhere from the gigantic sphinx to the most minute coin.

The best authorities give this head-dress an obtuse-angled triangle shape, but I never could make any thing of this hypothesis.

I am rather inclined to think that this most characteristic of Egyptian coiffures was an elongated piece of heavy cloth; the lower half of which was split into three divisions.



When the cloth was tied on the head, the two outer divisions were brought over the shoulders, the middle one being left to hang down the back.



A very becoming and very common head-dress of the women was a narrow band or fillet round the black hair. This fillet was often embroidered with gold and bright colors, and a large water-lily, or an imitation of one, was fastened to it in front and projected over the forehead.

At the British Museum upstairs you will find modern representations of Egyptian warriors with their horses and chariots.

These are kings or great conquerors, and their clothing is exceptional. If I had to paint Pharaoh pursuing the Israelites, I should not be guided entirely by these representations without further research ; but they give an idea of what the Egyptian paraphernalia of war was like in the time of Moses.

The caution I would give you in painting Egyptian subjects is not to overdo the Egyptian element. If in your researches you find an extraordinary head-dress like a chemical retort, or a patent cowl for a smoky chimney, do not be in a hurry to introduce it. Be satisfied with the simpler and more generic forms of Egyptian head-gear.



The transition from Egyptian to Greek costume, like the transition from Egyptian to Greek art, was very gradual. Without, however, stopping to speculate on the costume of the dubious Homeric period, we will proceed at once to the *terra firma* of the historical age.

I shall always use the word "tunic" to designate the under-garment, or that which was worn next the skin. If the tunic were never more seen than *our* under-garments, its fashion and form would be of little importance: but as it often (especially in early times) was the *only* garment worn, it is well to consider its construction.

The tunic for both men and women was made either of wool, linen, or some material resembling cotton. It was called by the Greeks "chiton," and appears to have been of two kinds, the Dorian and the Ionian.

The "Dorian" (the earliest form) was a short woollen shirt for the men, without sleeves, and for the women a long linen garment, also without sleeves.

These chitons were, however, not made like our shirts and chemises. They consisted simply of two square pieces of stuff, one for the front and one for the back. These pieces were linked together on the shoulders by the means of clasps, brooches, or fibulæ, and the different varieties of the Dorian chiton were mainly due to the degree in which they

were sewn together at the sides. The pieces never appear to have been united above the waist or girdle, but below this zone they were sometimes united on both sides down to the ground. Sometimes one side was open as high as the middle of the thigh.

The Spartan girls, who were very active and athletic, adopted this fashion, as it gave their limbs freer play. When they married, and gave up active games, they wore the chiton close. The Amazons are always represented with this slit-up garment. Sometimes (as in the Bacchantes) one side is entirely open. Sometimes there is but one girdle, the usual one round the waist, which is said to have been put on under instead of over the garment it was intended to confine. In this case the chiton must have been tucked into the girdle, and this may have been done occasionally. But there are plenty of antiques where the girdle is plainly visible outside. Sometimes there is a second girdle round the hips, the use of which was to shorten the dress by pulling it up through it, and then allowing it to flap over, so that this hip girdle is never seen.

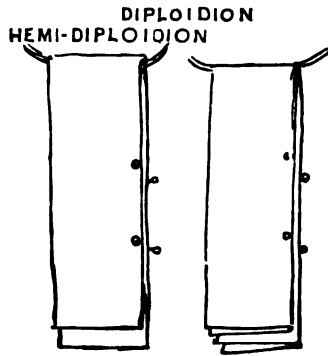
Before finishing with the Dorian chiton, I ought to mention that in cold weather two (and sometimes three) chitons were worn, one over the other. The rich people had inner chitons, made expressly for the purpose, but the poor simply wore their old and shabby ones next the skin, and their best of course outside.



The Ionic chiton was a long and very loose garment, made shirt fashion, and with sleeves that seldom came below the elbow. These sleeves were often slit up, and fastened at intervals with small clasps or studs.

The Doric was the older garment of the two.

In later times the Ionic chiton worn by the men was of two kinds. The chiton worn by the free-



men was a garment with openings, and sometimes even sleeves, for both arms. On the other hand, that peculiar to slaves had an opening only for the *left* arm, leaving the right shoulder and breast bare.

The "diploidion" and "hemi-diploidion" are supposed by Müller and other authorities to have been a kind of double chiton, but I do not think this hypothesis to be correct. I rather believe these names to have been given to a kind of short mantle, which was quite independent of the chiton. Although, as I have already stated, the chiton was constantly worn alone, yet no person could be considered what we should call full dressed without the "pallium" or cloak. In Sparta, although the young girls invariably wore the chiton alone, it would have been considered highly improper for any married

woman to appear without some upper garment. Indeed, unless the climate has changed very much within the last two thousand years, a cloak, (and a good thick one too) would be indispensable. The only time I have ever landed at Athens snow lay thick on the ground, and a bitter cold wind swept down from Hymettus.

The pallium was square-cut, but not necessarily a square. There were several ways of putting it on. It was sometimes wound round the body and thrown over the left shoulder. It was sometimes fastened on the right shoulder with a clasp, leaving the right arm free. In short, there were as many ways of wearing it as we have of wearing a Scotch plaid.

The pallium was of all degrees of thickness and of every variety of color; scarlet, purple, saffron, olive, and pale green seem to have been the most fashionable colors.

For the poorer classes the pallium served as a covering by night as well as a garment by day. It was to them a blanket; and there is no doubt that our word "pall" is derived from pallium.

The "peplon," or shawl, was worn in Greece by the women only. It was much ampler and made of thinner material than the pallium; we find, however, that the Orientals of both sexes wore something very similar, and when we read of David or any other personage of the Bible rending his garment, the shawl is most probably meant.



The modes of wearing the peplon were at least as numerous as the ways of adjusting the pallium. In many of the ancient alto-reliefs women are represented with both arms and hands concealed by the peplon. Indeed, there does not seem to have been much coquetry displayed in wearing the peplon. It was emphatically one of those garments used for comfort and not for show. Nevertheless, from the fineness of the material and the great area of the peplon, it was, perhaps, more picturesque and graceful than more formal pieces of finery.

The Greek "chlamys" is best translated by the word scarf. Sometimes it seems exactly to correspond with what we understand by "scarf," being a narrow strip of fine material, often embroidered and sometimes ornamented with a fringe. The drapery which is often introduced to give relief to a nude statue, is generally some kind of chlamys. The drapery of the Apollo Belvidere is a familiar example.

There is another garment which was sometimes worn by the Greek women over the long tunic. This was a sleeveless short tunic much ornamented, but without a girdle. We have many examples of this dress in the figures on the Greek vases. I am told that modern milliners call this kind of thing a peplum, but this is quite a misnomer. A peplum or peplon is, as we have seen, an ample shawl.

When the chlamys was worn as a cloak, it was

either fastened in front below the neck or on the right shoulder ; in both cases by means of a brooch. As the chlamys when cut as a scarf would be wretchedly meagre and poor when worn as a cloak, it was modified and extended in shape, and, indeed, in this form (were it not for the thinness of the material) it would be hardly distinguishable from the pallium.

The female scarfs were almost always used *as* scarfs and not as cloaks. They were more ornamented than those of the men, and were often embroidered with gold.

The Coa vestis, or robe of Cos, was made of the finest silk, and was as transparent as our thinnest veils. It was generally dyed either deep blue or purple, and I need hardly add, was never worn by any respectable female.

Greek women do not appear to have worn much covering for the head, except when they got old. In youth the hair was so abundant and the art of arranging it was carried to such perfection, that to hide it would have been a great blunder. To protect themselves from the sun's rays in summer and from the storms in winter they had parasols and umbrellas, shaped exactly like the modern Japanese article. These they either carried over their heads themselves, or had a female slave to carry them.

Nothing, to my mind, shows the exquisite taste of the Greeks more than the way the women arranged their hair. The bands and jewels with which the



hair was often adorned, rather assisted nature instead of distorting her. If we compare these classical coiffures with the frightful wigs worn by the Roman ladies under the Cæsars, or with the plaited tresses of mediæval times, or again with the powder and pomatum structures of the last century, we are struck by the great superiority of the Greek fashion.

I am not giving a lecture on hair-dressing, and will say nothing about modern times, beyond emphatically condemning every fashion which distorts the shape of the head.

The Greek modes of arranging the hair, however elaborate, never leave us in doubt as to what is underneath. We can always trace the shape of the head. We never fancy that the knots, chignons, and tresses conceal a sugar-loaf or a small portmanteau.



Sometimes, as in the Medici Venus, the hair was gathered in a knot in the front part of the head, but generally the knot was placed behind, where it balanced the face, and broke the nearly straight line formed by the neck and the back of the head.

The bands and fillets with which the head was often encircled are very graceful adjuncts. A crescent or diadem is often seen on the heads of goddesses, queens, and princesses; and it is not easy to conceive a more noble or royal ornament.

Nets made either of thread or silk were also worn to confine the hair, but these nets fitted close to the head and were not much used for the chignon, as with us in the days of beavers' tails.

The women of Lesbos had a peculiar way of dressing their hair, which savors rather more of the later Roman than of the Greek fashions. You will notice that none of these coiffures are suggestive of wigs. If false hair *was* worn, it was worn with judgment and discretion, and was never allowed to mar the symmetry of the head.

Greek men, like the women, seldom covered their heads, except when on a journey or at work in the sun.

The simplest and probably the oldest head-covering for the men was the conical skull-cap as seen on the head of Ulysses, but there are examples of soft broad-rimmed hats made either of felt, leather, or straw. These would have been worn by field laborers, masons, etc.

The Phrygian cap is worn at the present day by almost all Mediterranean fishermen. This is the famous cap of liberty, and although in very bad repute since the French Revolution, it is a comfortable and inoffensive head-covering.

The first helmets were modifications of the Ulysses cap. The material was changed from straw or felt to thick leather or brass. A couple of feathers were sometimes added, and sometimes doubtless the leather



or brass was ornamented with gold and precious stones.

After a time it was found that this primitive helmet did not protect the face ; so a large piece was added in front. This covered the face, but was soldered to the helmet and not movable. It is this immovability of the vizor which throws the whole helmet back when the face is uncovered, and it is this backward position which



gives the peculiar character to the Greek helmet. We see it constantly in the statues of Minerva, and we have adopted it for our figure of Britannia.

In later times still further improvements were made. A movable vizor was invented and flaps to protect the ears, and the coal-scuttle shape went out of fashion.

The defensive body-armor of the Greeks consisted of a close-fitting leather jerkin terminating at the hips. Strips of leather loosely connected together sprang from the bottom of this jerkin, and reached nearly half-way down the thigh. Both the jerkin and the strips of this petticoat were often strengthened by bands of metal. Armor was also worn below the knees. These greaves protected the shins, but did not encircle the whole leg.

There can be no doubt, from the descriptions of Homer and other ancient authors, that all this defensive armor was worn, but many of the elaborately ornamented and embossed breast-plates and greaves which are to be seen in every museum (though nominally Greek) are the works of a much later age.

Before finishing what I have to say about Greek costume, I ought to mention the coverings for the feet. These were of manifold shapes and fashions ; sometimes they consisted of a mere sole fastened to the foot with thongs ; sometimes the toes were covered, but as there were no sides nor heel-piece the thongs were still necessary. The most elegant form was that which we see in the statue of Diana.

In the very early days of Greece, it was considered effeminate to protect the foot, but at a later period every one except children, slaves, and ascetic philosophers wore some kind of sandal when they went out ; and in the last two centuries before the Christian era, great luxury and elegance were displayed in the adornment of those sandals.

The costumes of some of the nations inhabiting Asia Minor differed greatly from those worn by the Greeks.

In several of the maritime provinces which had frequent intercourse, and indeed had been colonized by the Greeks, this difference was not very marked, although even here there was an Oriental or Assyrian element introduced ; but the dresses of Phrygia



were much more Assyrian than Greek. In the first place, the Phrygians, like Oriental people generally, had a dislike to expose any part of the body, consequently they wore tight sleeves reaching down to the wrist. Drawers or close-fitting hose covered their legs and feet, and over these they wore regular shoes made of soft leather.

To complete the costume, an armless tunic was worn, reaching to below the knees and girt by a leather belt. The whole of this rather elaborate dress was often embroidered and ornamented with the richest colors. It was altogether an effeminate and a gorgeous dress, such as Paris might have worn when he captivated Helen.

The dress of the women bore a greater resemblance to the Greek; but fashion insisted on having the arms and feet covered. Whilst the women of Lydia and the maritime provinces indulged in the most coquettish and elegant Greek fashions, the ladies of the interior had quite a Persian way of dressing. A very long close-fitting tunic or gown with tight sleeves reaching to the wrist, with a girdle for married women, and ungirt round the waist for young girls, seems to have been the usual costume. Like the men, they wore shoes, and often the Phrygian cap.

If the men were fond of embroidered garments, it may be guessed that the ladies were not behind in the matter of ornament. Many of their dresses were

figured all over with spots, stars, and a kind of shawl pattern, whilst the coiffures sometimes developed into sultana-like turbans, and were enriched with the most showy jewels.

Jewelry of all kinds was indeed worn profusely by both sexes, and it was a common saying in ancient Greece, when a man was effeminate or voluptuous, that he ought to go to Lydia and have his ears pierced.

Before passing on to the dresses of Imperial Rome, it will not be out of place to consider the important question of how to clothe the personages of the New Testament.

I call this question an important one, because the New Testament is, *par excellence*, the great field for subjects of a high class, and in the present era of research and investigation, it cannot be a matter of indifference to the painter how the Founder of Christianity and his disciples were dressed.

The Mosaic laws strictly forbade any representation of living organisms. We have therefore nothing to guide us in our research, as we have for Egyptian, Assyrian, and Greek costume. The dress of the Jewish priests is tolerably minutely described in Leviticus, and is indeed almost identical with that worn at the present day ; but we have no authority whatever for the ordinary dress of the Jews in the time of Tiberius.

The old masters almost invariably adopted some



shade of red and blue for the dress of Christ, and the same colors were also generally reserved for the robes of the Virgin Mary.

This choice of colors seems to have originated somewhere about the sixth century, but it was not till much later that the Church adopted these colors so exclusively that the artist had no option in the matter. This traditional choice of colors became more and more binding as ages rolled on. It has lasted even to the present day, and few painters of religious subjects for church decoration would venture upon a departure from the time-honored red and blue.

The practice may have some advantages. In the first place, these colors (when in combination) have come to have a kind of sacred significance, and from being reserved for the highest personages of the New Testament, they serve the same purpose that was formerly fulfilled by the nimbus.

They attract the eye to the principal figure in the composition. Again, they are strong primary colors ; their juxtaposition in a picture is unusual, and therefore likely to draw attention to the figure which is clothed in them.

The disadvantages are, first, the difficulty of harmonizing two such colors as red and blue (a difficulty enormously increased when there are several figures in the composition) ; and, secondly, the great improbability that our Saviour or the Virgin Mary ever *were* so attired.

In the *very* early ages of Christianity, we never find this red and blue.

The Saviour, unless enthroned in glory, is generally represented as the Good Shepherd, and his garments are white or some shade of gray.

It may be argued that as he personates the Good Shepherd, the artists of course give him a shepherd's dress, but that this dress may have been totally unlike the one he actually wore.

This is perfectly true, and I am not recommending the blind adoption of this shepherd's tunic. I merely mention these earliest representations of Christ, as an answer to those who argue for the antiquity of the red and blue. If in the absence of precise information we allow ourselves to be guided by precedent, it is only logical to go to the *earliest* precedent.

The truth is that there are two distinct methods of treating subjects from the New Testament, especially those where Christ himself is introduced.

One is the traditional or mediæval method, and the other the naturalistic or (as I prefer to call it) the natural method, the word "naturalistic" being generally applied to the grotesque style of the early German and Dutch masters.

The first or traditional method seems to me more suitable for stained-glass windows and for church decoration generally, than for easel pictures. In decorative work no one expects to see the apostles

and saints clad in the homely garments they certainly wore.

The figures are to a certain extent symbolical; they represent the personages beatified; and gorgeously colored mantles with jewelled borders, nimbi, and other mediæval ornaments are not so much out of place.

Even here I would depart from the traditional red and blue for the dress of Christ. White and gold are more suggestive of perfection and purity than strong colors, and I cannot help thinking that the red tunic which tradition gives to St. John is singularly inappropriate to his character.

I do not, however, wish to extend my remarks in this direction, but rather to confine what I have to say about costumes to real, and not to ideal dresses.

If there exists a danger of degrading the ancient Jewish patriarchs by giving them the dress which they probably wore, the danger becomes greatly intensified when we have to deal with the sacred personages of the New Testament. Nevertheless, I think that something might be done toward an approximation to truth without any irreverence.

In the first place, I would discard all strong positive reds, blues, and purples for the dresses, as inappropriate. To wear garments of these bright hues was the prerogative of kings, emperors, and great generals, and it is quite out of keeping with the spirit of the New Testament to clothe its personages in these imperial colors.

White, dull yellow, brown, and black are the colors to which I should principally adhere. Linen, bleached and unbleached, goats' hair, and wool of all shades, from creamy white to sooty black, would be the materials.

Clemens of Alexandria says : " All dyed colors should be avoided in dress, for these are far away from man's need and from truth ; and besides they give proof of evil in the inward disposition."

Tertullian, who wrote about two hundred years after Christ, has a whole chapter denouncing the iniquity of dyed colors.

Now it is hardly conceivable that these early Christian writers would have fulminated against red, purple, and blue garments if Christ and his apostles had been in the habit of wearing them.

Secondly, I should endeavor, while preserving the tunic and outer cloak or pallium, to give to these garments something of an Oriental appearance. There is not much scope for doing this with the tunic. Rich men, like Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus, would wear long tunics reaching to their ankles ; but it is very doubtful whether Christ himself, who denounces the scribes on account of their loving to go in long clothing, would wear a garment of this description.

The women would have two tunics, one over the other, with short or long sleeves, but never with the open sleeves of the Greek women.



The under tunic (which would, in fact, be the Roman stola) would reach to the feet. The upper one would be shorter, and embroidered or ornamented with colors.

The pallium or cloak, both of the men and the women, should have a fringe; not a heavy gorgeous one, like the Assyrian kings, but a thin light one.

In the 22d chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses commands: "Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture," and in the Book of Numbers these fringes are again ordained. When we consider how particular the Jews were in observing their law, we may assume, as a fact, that the cloak or outer garment of the New Testament would have a fringe, and this would at once give it a Jewish or Oriental character. Broad vertical stripes again, either on the tunic or the cloak, of a different colored wool to the garment itself, would be unlike Greek or Roman fashions, and would be perfectly allowable.

Thirdly, I should not hesitate (when the subject required it) about covering the heads of my figures.

In most Biblical pictures by the old masters, particularly of the Roman school, we find the figures bareheaded.

There does not seem to be any special reason for this, and whatever may have been the practice in Italy, it certainly could not be the custom in Syria and Palestine to expose the head to the burning rays of the sun.

St. Peter and the other Galilee fishermen may very likely have worn some kind of Phrygian cap, and we may be quite sure that all the personages of the New Testament would have had some protection for the head ; probably a loose cloth bound round the head with a cord.

Some writers have said that they merely threw a portion of the cloak over their heads. This they very likely did on an emergency, but when undertaking a journey or wandering about the country, they must have had a proper head-covering.

As to the shoes, I should avoid both the elegant sandal of the Greeks, and the elaborate leggings and straps of the Roman soldier.

The ordinary Jew, of the class to which the apostles belonged, was not in the habit of wearing any foot-covering at home, but when on a journey he would protect the soles of his feet with leather or goat-skin.

It is a mistake to suppose that garments made of coarse materials are incompatible with dignity. Any one who has seen the fishermen of the Adriatic or the Arabs of the desert, knows the contrary. It is not the material, but the amplitude of the garment and the mode of wearing it, which give grandeur and dignity.

We, as artists, have no means of making our personages speak. All we can do is to take care that their gestures, appearance, and dress, shall not



be inconsistent with the words they are supposed to utter. If we bear this in mind, and at the same time honestly endeavor to clothe them according to their station in life, we cannot be far wrong.

Before leaving the subject of the New Testament, I should like to say a few words about the position the Jews assumed at their meals. I endeavored to get at the truth a year or two ago, and the results of my investigations were these.

The rich Jews, like the rich Romans, reclined at their meals ; the poor either stood or sat. Of this there can be no doubt, and it is only what might have been expected. The rich would have a proper dining-hall, fitted with a triclinium or couch. The poor would dine in the same room in which they worked, and would have no place for so bulky a piece of furniture as a broad couch.

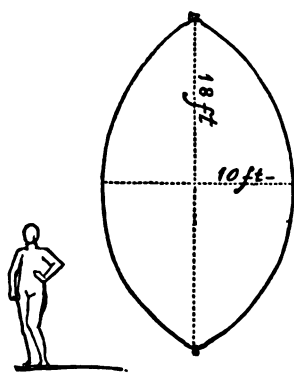
As for the Last Supper, it must be recollected that the room where it was eaten was an upper room, and therefore very unlikely to be furnished with a triclinium ; and, secondly, it was more in keeping with Christ's teaching to adopt the humble fashion of sitting rather than the luxurious one of reclining. Finally, all the Evangelists use the word "sat" and "sitting," which, if correctly translated, ought surely to settle the question.

On the whole, therefore, I think that Leonardo, Andre del Sarto, Raffaello, and all the old masters were right in giving the figures a sitting posture,

and that modern innovators are wrong in assuming that because Roman patricians and their imitators in Judæa reclined at their meals, our Lord, and his disciples would also adopt the same position.

The costume of the ancient Romans under the kings was very like that of the Greeks. The resemblance was especially noticeable in military costume. If, therefore, you have to paint any Roman or Sabine warriors of the time of the early kings, you should take Greek armor as your model, rather than the late Roman, such as is seen in the reliefs of the Trajan column. The Romans, however, appear never to have worn the peculiar Greek helmet which protected the face.

In these early times there is no reason to suppose that the civil dress differed materially from that of the Greeks. Both sexes wore the tunic and pallium (or cloak). The Roman "toga" was a large semi-circular pallium.



The question as to the exact shape of the toga has never been settled, and most likely never will be. The older authorities say that it was rectilinear on one side and curvilinear on the other ; but more modern

writers say it was of the shape of two segments



of a circle joined together. I am inclined to favor this latter opinion. It would in this case be folded in two before being put on, and the complicated and multitudinous folds would be easily accounted for.

It is doubtful when it was first worn, but it certainly was in fashion during the kings, and it would therefore be the proper clothing for Numa Pompilius, the elder Brutus, Tarquin, and the other personages of that period. The mode of wearing it in these ancient times was slightly different to the fashion which prevailed in the time of the Cæsars. Instead of being brought round the body *under* the right arm it was laid *over* the shoulder, thus covering the whole right arm. This must have been extremely inconvenient, and although when sitting in judgment or taking part in some state ceremonies, the ancient Roman senators may have muffled themselves up in this way, it is impossible to believe that they did not adopt some more comfortable way of draping themselves when actively employed.

We are told that in early times the toga was the *only* garment worn by the men, but I suspect that this is a mistake. I rather think that a short sleeveless tunic was always worn.

I shall refer to the toga again, but I wish to proceed chronologically, and to finish what I have to say about the costume of the earliest Roman period. Whatever may have been the custom with the men, the women certainly wore a long tunic, and a shorter

one underneath. It is well to avoid giving them the chlamys, as we have no evidence that they wore it : but a cloak was certainly customary. It was either of the toga, semicircular make, or cut square like the Greek pallium. Care should be taken, in dressing Roman figures of this period, to keep the costumes very simple and primitive.

The togas of the Roman kings are said to have been striped with purple. Pliny mentions this, and in a matter of this sort he is likely to have been correct.

Silk was introduced into Europe about this time, but the material was far too costly to be generally worn. We may suppose that a luxurious monarch like Tarquinius Superbus may have worn a tunic of Oriental silk, but luxury of this kind was not general, as it became six hundred years later under the emperors.

The same stern sobriety of costume should be observed in painting subjects of the Consulate.

Scipio Africanus, Regulus, Coriolanus, and the other heroes of this period, should be clothed with Spartan plainness. White (or at any rate monochromatic) cloaks and togas, armor composed of iron, bronze, and leather would be the proper clothing during the Consulate.

We now come to the Imperial period ; and here I would remark that in the Augustine age, luxury had not reached that point of extravagance and bad



taste which it acquired afterward. The toga was still the ample woollen cloak of preceding ages, and was worn over a simple short tunic. I ought, however, to mention that in the time of Augustus the toga began to be discarded in favor of more convenient garments. It was, however, always worn on ceremonial or state occasions, and great care was taken with the adjustment of the folds. A Roman gentleman would dress for a dinner at Lucullus', or a grand show at the Colosseum, by putting on a clean white toga.

The toga pulla was made of the wool of black sheep. It was of a coarser texture than the white toga, and was worn by mourners. The toga picta was, as its name implies, embroidered with colors. The toga prætexta had a purple or rather what we should call a lake-colored border. It was worn by young people, and also by magistrates and other officials. The purple and white striped toga, already mentioned as having been worn by the old Roman kings, was also worn, under the Empire, by the "equites," or mounted knights. The emperor alone had the privilege of wearing a toga entirely of purple. The female cloak of this period was the palla, which is only another form of the word pallium. It differed only from the toga in being rectangular.

The long tunic worn over the inner one (the gown in short) of the Roman matrons was called a "stola." The lower part of it was crimped or plaited, so as to

form a kind of flounce. This explains the numerous minute folds we see about the feet and ankles in many of the portrait statues.

I ought not to omit mentioning a very important article of female dress, viz., the "strophium." It was the same as the Greek "strophion," and seems to have been of universal use. It was a broad band, supposed to have been made of kid leather, and was wound round the waist to give support, and to improve what dressmakers call the figure. It was put on over the inner tunic, and therefore corresponds exactly with the modern corset. It does not appear that either the Greek or Roman ladies attached any value to a thin waist, and this strophium was worn for comfort and not in compliance with the fashion.

The Romans (I am still speaking of the Augustan age) wore in time of war the "sagum." This was a cloak made of thick woollen material, and fastened in front or on the shoulder with a brooch. It was, in fact, identical with some forms of the Greek chlamys. The "paludamentum" was the same kind of garment, made of finer wool, and used by the officers. The sagum and paludamentum were not exclusively military, as in time of war it was the custom for civilians to throw aside their togas and assume this war-like garb. The "lacerna" was very commonly worn by the Roman citizens either simply over the tunic, or in cold weather over the togas as well. It was very much the same kind as the sagum, and worn in



the same way. It was almost always of a dark color. The "pænula" was a circular cloak, with a hole in the middle to put the head through. It was slit open in front from the bottom, about half-way up, so as to give a little freedom to the arms. It was made of thick cloth, and generally had a hood. It was a garment essentially for bad weather, and must have greatly resembled our Inverness capes, or rather what is called a "poncho."

The want of head-coverings amongst the higher classes of both the ancient Greeks and Romans has always struck me as being very singular. The Etruscans, like the semi-oriental peoples of Asia Minor, had a great variety of head-gear.

Caps of all shapes, more or less richly ornamented, were common amongst the Etruscans; but the Roman citizens (at least the upper ten thousand) seem to have had nothing to protect the head from the sun's rays. We all know that habit will do a great deal; our Bluecoat boys do not suffer by going about bareheaded; but I cannot help thinking that an elderly Roman senator must occasionally have found the want of a hat on his way to the forum.

You will not often have to paint pictures of the ancient Etruscans. I need not therefore say much about their rich and varied dresses. I may, however, mention that their wardrobe bore about the same relation to the Roman costume that the Asia Minor dresses did to the Greek. There was an

Oriental and sometimes an Egyptian tendency about the cut and ornamentation of their garments. Instead of the classical sandal of the Romans they wore shoes, and even boots, made of some soft material. In short, they were more effeminate in their tastes. The more wealthy an Etruscan was, the richer would be his garments. He resembled in this respect many modern Orientals, whereas his neighbor of ancient Rome would (at least in the Augustan age) affect the greatest simplicity.

A Roman patrician would as soon think of decking himself out in an embroidered and spangle tunic, as an English gentleman would of assuming the plush and gorgeous livery of a Belgravian footman.

Luxury and effeminacy of dress began to creep into fashion in Rome as early as the time of Tiberius, who (probably because he did not wish to have any imitation of the finery of his own court) promulgated very strict sumptuary laws as to dress.

These laws were enforced and even made more stringent by some of his successors, but fashion was too strong even for Roman emperors; and under such sovereigns as Heliogabalus, but little was left of the ancient Roman simplicity. In one particular alone did the Romans of the Decadence contrast favorably with their neighbors the Etruscans—I mean in the matter of jewelry. The Roman noble, even of the most degraded period, never decked himself out with necklaces, armlets, and breast ornaments of



gold like the Etruscan. The only jewelry he wore was a signet ring.

The Roman ladies were less sparing of ornament, but even they did not load themselves with gold trinkets of every description after the Oriental and Etruscan fashion. Much of this Roman jewelry was of very beautiful design, and has been most conscientiously imitated by Castellani.

With regard to the fashion of wearing the hair and beard, it is certain that up to the third century B.C., the Romans wore their hair long and did not shave.

If, therefore, you have to paint any subject of the time of the kings, it would be incorrect to represent your personages with cropped hair and clean shaven, as though they were Romans of the later Consulate and Augustan age.

Some Sicilian barbers, who came over to Rome about the beginning of the third century B.C., introduced the custom of shaving and having the hair cut short, and this custom continued without intermission until the time of Hadrian or Trajan, when beards came into fashion again. The Sybarites, of a later period than this, used to oil their hair and sprinkle it with gold-dust. Wigs were also worn, by men as well as by women. If the emperor of the time happened to have a crop of thick curly hair, it was astonishing what a number of curly crops of hair suddenly appeared in Rome. Perhaps

we need not go as far back as ancient Rome for phenomena of this kind. It is needless for me to describe the stiff, tasteless style of hair-dressing which prevailed amongst the ladies of the later Empire. It was their uncouth artificial coiffures which were imitated in France and England about the beginning of the century. It was this pseudo-classical style both of hair-dressing and apparel which made our grandmothers and great-grandmothers such unlovable objects.

A real classical revival after the puff and powder of the preceding generation, a return to the best Greek and Roman fashions, would have been a great blessing both to society in general and to the arts especially; but such classicism as prevailed under the first Napoleon was hardly an improvement on the perruques and pig-tails that preceded it.

The Roman military dress is so well known from the bas-reliefs of the times of Trajan, Hadrian, and Vespasian, that I need not go into any details respecting it. The only remark I would make is, that the linen drawers we see indicated in the sculptures, were not worn in the army before the wars of Gaul and Germany.

The dresses of the time of Constantine and his successors are very little known.

To some artists this is rather an attraction, as affording an opportunity of invention in costume,



which is denied to them in a better known period ; and it must be admitted that, provided they keep to what was likely to have been worn, no one can prove them to be wrong.

There are a few coins and medals in existence which give some idea of the appearance of an emperor or great personage, but of the dress of the common people we know nothing for certain.

In conclusion, I would remark that correctness in the matter of costume is far more necessary to an artist now than it was formerly. In this age of archæology and research we find, even on the stage, the most scrupulous fidelity observed, and it behooves us, as artists, not to lag behind.

You will find, both in the Academy library and at South Kensington, many excellent works on costume, and with such a mass of information within your reach it will be unpardonable if you fall into the anachronisms and absurdities of our ancestors.

LECTURE II.

BYZANTINE AND ROMANESQUE ART.

IN the lectures I am about to deliver on Early Italian Art, I shall not enter into minute detail, nor shall I attempt a history of *all* the painters of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries who deserve mention. All I can hope to give you is a sort of bird's-eye view of the various phases through which the Art of Painting passed from its lowest ebb to its highest development.

I feel as if you were a party of excursionists about to be personally conducted across a great art continent, and as if it behooved me, as your conductor, to perform my duty with judgment and discretion.

We shall have a vast desert to cross, where nothing is found to break the dull and ugly monotony of the scene. We cannot do better than take the express train for this part of our journey, and get over the ground as quickly as possible.

Substituting miles for years, we shall, when we have accomplished something like a thousand miles, begin to notice signs of a more fertile soil. These indications will be very faint at first, but after a time the objects of interest will become more frequent,

and we shall leave our train and take to riding or driving so as to get a better view of what we are passing. After a drive of a hundred miles the country will become so interesting that we shall buckle on our knapsacks and perform the rest of the journey on foot.

To continue the parallel, I would remind you that you are only excursionists, and not leisurely travellers desirous of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the products of the country they are about to traverse.

To acquire a thorough knowledge of the decay and revival of art, it would be necessary to consult the numerous and learned treatises on the subject, and to study the political and social state of Italy during the Middle Ages.

Such a study, though doubtless very instructive, would be rather a dry subject for a lecture, even if I were equal to the task. I shall, therefore, attempt nothing of the kind, and having always had a tender feeling for those whose attendance here is compulsory, and admiration for those who come of their own free will, I shall endeavor to be as little tedious as possible, whilst imparting to you a sort of *résumé* of mediæval painting and the early Italian schools.

The designs and paintings which have been discovered in the catacombs are commonly held to be the earliest specimens we possess of Christian art; and if by Christian art we mean the representation

of Biblical and New Testament subjects, they undoubtedly *are* the earliest. If, however, by Christian art we mean the peculiar style which grew up and was fostered by the early Church, we must look elsewhere, for these paintings are essentially pagan in style.

In common with the paintings of the Constantine baths, and with the numerous decorative designs discovered in the pagan catacombs of the period, they are clearly derived direct from classical sources.

They vary in merit according to the skill of the artist who executed them, and also according to the epoch of their production, those of the second century being infinitely superior to those of the third and fourth. In the earliest of these paintings, the Good Shepherd replaces Orpheus, Elias replaces Apollo, and so on, but the style is in no way distinguishable from contemporary Roman wall-paintings. The arabesque ornamentation of the panels is exactly similar, and although the subjects are such as Moses striking the rock, Jonah swallowed by the whale, Daniel in the lions' den, and various Christian miracles, these interesting works cannot be considered in any other light than specimens of late Roman art adapted to the illustration of Scriptural subjects.

These catacomb paintings look to me more like copies of better things than original paintings. They appear to have been done by decorative artists, who would naturally be more at home with the orna-



mental borders and arabesques than with the figures. We may often notice this kind of inequality of work in modern houses.

The skilled workmen employed by the professional decorator will execute with consummate neatness all the ornamental parts, but if any figure is introduced into the panels it will be a coarse replica of some Pompeii muse, nymph, or cupid, possibly quite good enough for the purpose, but hardly indicative of the state of art of the period.

In the paintings of the third and fourth centuries there is a very noticeable decline in the drawing and execution, but there is still a reminiscence of a classical style. The draperies are still disposed with something like taste, and the heads, though very rude and clumsy, have not the barbaric hideousness of a later period. The last flicker of the antique lamp is to be found in those catacomb paintings of the fourth and fifth centuries.

When I say that they are not Christian in style, I mean that they are not ecclesiastical. Speaking strictly, from a common-sense rather than from an art point of view, it appears to me that the simple garments and the un-nimbi'd heads of the personages are more in keeping with the spirit of the New Testament than the gold and the gorgeous ornamentation of a later period. However that may be, viewed simply as works of art, they are the natural sequence to Pompeii and the later forms of Roman mural painting.

The case is very different with the large Roman and Ravenna mosaics of the fourth and fifth centuries, but before proceeding to criticise these productions, I should wish to say a few words about antique mosaic work.

The art of depicting objects by means of small cubes of marble, stone, or terra-cotta was invented about 300 years before the Christian era.

From a very simple beginning it gradually developed itself, until under the first emperors we find the most complicated ornaments, and even large historical compositions, executed in mosaic. The use of mosaic for the floors of temples and dwelling-houses was universal wherever the Romans spread. It was not confined to Imperial Rome or to luxurious Pompeii, but is invariably found wherever a wealthy Roman planted his villa, whether in the vicinity of the great Sahara Desert, or in the less savage neighborhood of the Isle of Wight. As your average modern Briton cannot do without his carpets, so the ancient Roman could not be happy without his tessellated pavement. In spite, however, of this widespread fashion, we do not find mosaic used as a means of wall decoration ; it was almost exclusively employed for floors and tables. Some of these small cabinet pieces are beautifully inlaid, and, as works of art, are by no means contemptible. In a very few which have been preserved to us, we find specimens of the "opus sectile" of the Romans. This differed



from ordinary mosaic by the tesserae being cut into the form of the object to be depicted, and then accurately put together like a puzzle map. The well-known four pigeons perched on a tazza, discovered at Tivoli, is, I believe, the most beautiful specimen extant of the ordinary Roman cabinet mosaic.

The examples of Roman tessellated work applied to perpendicular surfaces are so rare and so unimportant that we cannot consider them as prototypes of the subsequent gigantic mosaic wall-pictures. The intermediate links are at any rate wanting. There is one, and only one, mosaic, that of St. Costanza, near Rome, which might be viewed as the missing link. It is supposed to have been executed toward the end of the fourth century, and belongs essentially to the decorative school of ancient pagan art. Indeed, so numerous are the little cupids and genii, and so prodigal has the artist been of vine tendrils, that the building containing it was formerly supposed to have been a temple of Bacchus. It is now, however, known that this, the earliest specimen of wall mosaic, was executed not in honor of Bacchus, but as a monument to the Christian Emperor Constantine's two daughters.

Not until the fifth century do we get to those colossal figures, those blue and gold backgrounds, those richly ornamented draperies, which constitute the true starting-point of ecclesiastical art. We often hear that Cimabue is the father of modern art, but

the only reason for making him a kind of art Adam is because his name has been handed down to us. The real fathers of modern Christian art are the nameless authors of these gorgeous though somewhat grim mosaics.

Most art historians have included these splendid works in the later Roman period. They cannot certainly be called truly Byzantine, although they have a decided Byzantine flavor about them, and it is probable that many of them were executed by Greek or Byzantine artists ; but, on the other hand, they are so strikingly dissimilar to late Roman work that they ought to be classed in a school by themselves. The forms of the figures are of course stiff and lifeless, if compared to the antique or to sixteenth-century art ; but they are quite graceful and animated when compared with the dead ugliness of the real Byzantine work. There is a certain grandeur, *sui generis*, about them (particularly in the Justinian and Theodora mosaics of Ravenna) quite independent of their size and gorgeous ornamentation, which we never find in later Byzantine work.

The mosaics of the sixth century are in no way different in style from those of the fifth. The finest specimens of this period are the well-known mosaics of SS. Cosmo and Damiano in Rome. The head and figure of the gigantic Christ, which forms the centre, has been much eulogized by critics ; but I confess I was disappointed when I last saw this



mosaic. Size, and perhaps antiquity, have a good deal to do with the awe-inspiring qualities attributed to this work.

If the art displayed in this figure were really of a high quality, some of its beauty would be retained in a reproduction on a small scale. However much the panels of the Sistine Chapel may be reduced, they always retain their original grandeur, whereas this over-praised figure appears to me to lose all its imposing appearance when copied or engraved on a small scale.

Of historical or Biblical compositions, properly so-called, there are none extant of this period. The cause of this is partly no doubt owing to the nature of the materials then in use. Mosaic is certainly not suitable for figures in action, nor for complicated compositions; but there is also another reason for the absence of subject-pictures during the whole of the long interval between the early Roman emperors and Giotto, and that is, they were not wanted.

There were no wealthy patricians in those dark ages who required their villas decorated, no Mæcenas to give a helping hand to struggling genius. The Church was the only patron the poor artists of the period had, and a very hard and narrow-minded patron she was, reducing men who (for aught we know) may have had some talent, to the level of mere workmen and artificers, strictly limiting the range of their subjects and fettering them with traditional rules.

We are now fast approaching the true Byzantine period of art. Historians tell us that Byzantine or Greek Christian art was the offspring of the Eastern Church, influenced originally by ancient Greek art. It seems hard to believe that these hideous deformities should have descended from ancient Greek sculpture. It is a kind of Darwinian theory turned upside down, but still it may be true.

Ancient Greek does not necessarily mean the art of Phidias and Praxiteles. It may mean the barbaric sculpture which preceded the advent of these great masters, and I confess there is something in the odious grimace and the stiff draperies of Byzantine figures which reminds me of certain very early Greek work.

The introduction of the Byzantine style into Italy seems to have been very gradual. The school existed at Constantinople certainly in the fifth century, and possibly much earlier.

Its influence may be traced in the large Italian mosaics of the sixth century, but it was not till near the year 700, when Constantinople was fairly established as the capital of the world, that it became in all its ugliness the dominant school in Italy.

The Church of the fifth and sixth centuries, with all its narrow-mindedness in the choice of subjects, gave the artist a certain amount of liberty in his drawing and flesh-painting, but about the year 700 even this liberty was denied him.



Certain types were invented by monkish painters, that is, by men who were violently opposed to every thing that made life agreeable. These men, it is needless to say, were quite untrained artists, but in their uncouth way they endeavored to substitute their own ideal of humanity for the real thing, and they succeeded only too well. The ghastly type being once firmly established, all subsequent artists of this school were obliged to conform to it. In the second Nicene Council, A.D. 787, it was decreed that :

“It is not the invention of the painter which creates the picture, but an inviolable law, a tradition of the Church. It is not the painters, but the holy fathers, who have to invent and to dictate.

“To them manifestly belongs the composition, to the painter only the execution.”

As I have already stated, there is good reason for believing that the holy fathers not only dictated the composition, but interfered pretty considerably with the execution, insisting as they did on ascetic, cadaverous heads and an indiscriminate use of gold.

There may have been another cause besides morbid asceticism which in the ninth century caused the Church to adopt such an unearthly type of humanity; namely, the fear of the Jews and Mahometans, who were very numerous at Constantinople.

It was natural that the growing sanctity of the grim mosaics should be associated in the minds both

of Jew and Mahometan with idol-worship, and accordingly we find that the Emperor Leo the Isaurian wished to conciliate his non-Christian subjects by the prohibition of all representation of the human form.

This, however, did not suit the monks. A synod was called, and ultimately it was agreed that sculpture alone should be interdicted; but may we not suppose that a kind of compromise was made about painting, and that it was settled that any near approach to the human form should be tabooed, that art in short was to be of the nature of that which graced the Auld Brig of Ayr?—

“ Forms like some bedlam statuary’s dream,
The crazed creations of misguided whim,
Forms might be worshipped on the bended knee,
And still the second dread command be free,
Their likeness is not found on earth, in air, or sea.”

Kugler’s description of these Byzantine heads is so good that I cannot refrain from giving it. He says :

“ The large ill-shaped eyes stare straight forward; a deep unhappy line, in which ill-humor seems to have taken up its permanent abode, extends from brow to brow beneath the bald and heavily-wrinkled forehead. The nose has the broad ridge of the antique still left above, but is narrow and pinched below, the anxious nostrils corresponding with the deep lines on each side of them.



"The mouth is small, but the somewhat protruding lower lip is in character with the melancholy of the whole picture. As long as such representations are confined to gray-headed saints and ecclesiastics they may be tolerated, but when the introduction of a kind of smirk is intended to convey the idea of a youthful countenance this type becomes intolerable. Even the Madonna, to whose countenance the meagreness of asceticism was hardly applicable, here assumes a thoroughly peevish expression, and was certainly never represented under so unattractive an aspect."

I have given you this quotation from Kugler, in order to show you the opinion of a learned and liberal-minded writer, who certainly cannot be called a severe critic.

He goes on to compare Byzantine with Chinese art, which is, I think, rather hard upon the poor Celestials.

Both styles of figure-painting are equally conventional, and equally untrue to nature, but Chinese figures are far more cheerful and decorative than the unhappy Byzantine.

A room decorated by a Chinese artist would be a pleasant place to live in ; but who except a long-distance walker, a forty days' faster, or one of our modern votaries of self-inflicted martyrdom, would care about inhabiting a house hung with Byzantine pictures ?

In these pictures the draperies gradually became more and more wooden, until at last they got to be thoroughly in keeping with the heads. There was a traditional arrangement of folds derived from the late Roman works, but this arrangement, though originally founded on sound principles, became in the hands of Byzantine artificers most untrue and stupid. The folds used to be indicated by a number of unmeaning straight lines, regardless of the form underneath.

The one redeeming feature in the art of Byzantium was the treatment of ornament. Founded partly on the late Roman as existing in numerous temples of Asia Minor during the reign of the Cæsars, and partly on the Persian style as seen at Persepolis, Palmyra, and elsewhere, Byzantine ornamentation is both rich and graceful. The Arabs and Moors carried the intricacies of Byzantine tracery still further, until the *ne plus ultra* was reached at the Alhambra ; but to my taste the original Byzantine style of ornamentation is bolder and more effective than the elaborate Mauresque.

There is no want of taste or invention betrayed here. Indeed there is far more variety than in the somewhat overloaded Roman style of ornamentation, as may be seen at once by comparing Byzantine capitals with the debased Corinthian of the Romans. This excellence (not only in architectural detail but in every department of ornamental art)



shows clearly that when the artists had free play they were not deficient in taste, and that we must ascribe the utter badness of Byzantine figure-painting to the proper cause ; namely, to the veto the Church seems to have set on the study of the human form.

The principal difference between the Byzantine and Romanesque ornamentation is the more frequent occurrence in the latter of geometrical patterns, formed principally by squares and equilateral triangles intersecting each other. The walls and pavements of the Romanesque churches of Italy abound with examples of this geometric decoration. In Romanesque ornament again, gold and mosaic are not so universally used as in Byzantine ; but the transition between the two styles was so gradual, and they were so closely connected, that it is almost impossible to draw the line between them.

Italy was in a very miserable and disturbed state during the dark centuries of the Middle Ages, being overrun by barbarous invaders and often afflicted by internecine wars, so that even without the leaden hand of the Church stifling all original talent, it is very improbable that any improvement in art could have been made.

For art to thrive, it is absolutely necessary that a country should be undisturbed and tolerably prosperous ; although it by no means follows that a prosperous country *must* produce great artists. Take,

for instance, the Republic of Venice during the Middle Ages, which, whilst Italy was being vexed with endless invasions and civil war, enjoyed great prosperity ; and yet not a single attempt was made by her artists to emancipate themselves from the dead level of Byzantine rules. On the contrary, the famous early mosaics of St. Mark's are amongst the most characteristic specimens of Byzantine art which have been preserved to us.

Of their original splendor (as far as gold and workmanship could contribute to it) there can be no doubt, but of legitimate art there is no trace. Like all the work of this school, whether mosaic or fresco, the figures are done by routine, and are as lifeless and mean in character as the worst Byzantine types. Of course I am speaking of the series of *early* mosaics in St. Mark's. The later ones executed in the twelfth century, although very Byzantine in character, partake largely of the general improvement which was noticeable at that time.

The tremendous rapidity with which Byzantine frescoes used to be executed is no excuse for their badness. Had the artists given ten times the labor they would have done no better. All original design was prohibited ; every thing was done from tracings of previous works. These tracings were reproduced on the wall to be painted, and the flesh tints were filled in with a uniform flat color, sometimes of a brick-dust and sometimes of a green hue. The

draperies were done in the same way, first a flat tint and then a few unmeaning black lines to represent folds. This process was entirely mechanical, the lines having no respect whatever for the limbs underneath.

To give you a better idea of the rapidity with which whole churches can be decorated in the Byzantine style, I will give Didron's description of Oriental fresco-painting. He was at Mount Athos about forty years ago, and had the opportunity of seeing a monk and his five assistants at work. Mount Athos has for the last thirteen centuries been the headquarters and principal laboratory of Byzantine art, and a countless number of pictures on wood are to this day exported thence as articles of commerce to the Russian Empire. M. Didron says : " One pupil spread the mortar on the wall ; the master drew the outline, without either cartoon or tracings ; another pupil laid on the colors ; a third gilt the nimbi, painted the ornaments, and wrote the inscriptions, which the master dictated to him from memory ; and lastly, two boys were fully occupied in grinding and mixing the colors."

The subject was a Christ and eleven apostles (life size), and the time taken to complete the work was under an hour!

I am not quite sure but what a couple of months' experience in the Mount Athos workshops might not be of advantage to some of our students in the antique school.

Our traveller adds (I think quite unnecessarily) that the work seemed to him very rude and coarse—but it can be easily understood that at this rate a whole church could be covered with frescoes in a few days. “C’ est magnifique, mais ce n’ est pas de l’ art.”

From what I have said, you will understand the unchangeable nature of Byzantine art. Pictures painted in this style may be more or less neatly executed, but their artistic merit varies very little, whether they be of the seventh or the nineteenth centuries, whether they decorate St. Mark’s at Venice or an obscure monastery on Mount Athos. As an illustration of this, note a picture in the National Gallery, by a Greek artist of the name of Emmanuel. The date of this work is 1650. It was therefore painted long after Titian, Raffaele, P. Veronese, and all the great masters had departed this life, and yet with all their glorious works before his eyes what does this primeval artist produce? All I can say is, “Go and see for yourselves.” Other schools have their ups and downs. The Italian, the Flemish, the French, and the English schools have all had, and will continue to have, their periods of elevation and depression; but Byzantine painting always maintains its dead level, and will continue to do so as long as the Greek Church lasts.

Pictures of this school are often associated with



ideas of sanctity, not only in holy Russia but in Western Europe. Almost all miracle-working pictures belong to this class. The Calabrian peasant, or the Andalusian muleteer, who would probably be unmoved by the Madonna di S. Sisto, is wrought up to a high pitch of religious fervor at the shrine of some olive Byzantine Virgin, with her pinched peevish face and wooden shoulders.

That this class of pictures has at all times been held to be peculiarly sacred, is proved from the fact that at Venice (even in the time of Titian) the cultivation of the stiff Byzantine style, for popular devotion, was maintained in juxtaposition with that of the most perfectly developed form of painting.

We may smile at the Venetian religious world, but I am not sure that at the present day an analogous tendency could not be imputed to some of us.

Is there not to some æsthetic nostrils a kind of odor of sanctity about mediæval perspective and composition? It is true that our revivalists do not wish to go back to the Byzantine period for our religious art; the Romanesque or at any rate the Quattro Cento style is the correct thing. But why go back at all? I can quite understand that in restoring an old cathedral it would be desirable to do so; but in a modern building (whether gothic or not) to reproduce forms which we know to be incorrect, and to introduce perspective which we know to be absurd, seems to me to be carrying our reverence for the past a little too far.

A letter appeared in the *Times* last summer which is so much to the purpose that I really must read it to you :—

" To the Editor of the 'Times.' "

June 30th.

" SIR,—I have before me a design for a window which it is proposed to place in a village church in Lincolnshire, as one of a group memorial of the late vicar, his widow, and two sons, clergymen, one of them a missionary of the Church Missionary Society who died in India. May I be allowed to describe the design? The window is of two lights. The dexter represents a cardinal in red hat and stockings, red robe with blue lining, and a nimbus round his head of a color resembling olive-green. The sinister light has an archbishop with mitre, pall, polychromatic vestments, and a blue nimbus round his head; in his left hand a pastoral staff, and in his right the Sacred Heart, crimson, with gold flames issuing from the top. The drawing is signed by an eminent London firm, and is submitted by the present vicar as a suitable memorial of his predecessor, who was an Evangelical of the old school, and of his widow, a lady whose dread of 'Popery' was almost morbid."

Writers on art are fond of asserting that in spite of the repulsive ugliness of the Byzantine types, we ought to be grateful to the school for keeping the lamp of art alive during seven or eight centuries; but I think that the history of the great revival does not bear out this assertion. We find Giotto and his followers hampered with the old traditions. We find Byzantine work rampant in Venice down to the time of the Bellinis, impeding and indeed excluding



all the various forms of progress which were spreading over Northern Italy ; and it may be noticed that all the faults and weaknesses of the early Italian painters are traceable to Byzantine sources. I question very much whether the revival of art would not have been more rapid and complete had the Byzantine school never existed.

The early reformers, Cimabue, Giotto, and Duccio, would have had the great mosaics of the fifth century, and such remnants of ancient pagan art as were then known, to inspire them. They would have been unfettered by Byzantine tradition, and I think it probable that their works would have been better in every respect.

Every one with any experience knows that it is easier to instil sound principles of art into one who is totally uninstructed, than into one who has already contracted a bad style of drawing ; and as it is with individuals, so also is it with schools and phases of art.

Then again it must be remembered that although the Byzantine school was the dominant one during the Middle Ages, there were, in Italy, France, and Germany, artists who had no connection with it, and whose compositions, as seen in manuscripts and missals, will bear favorable comparison with similar work by Greek artists of the same period.

I must refer you again to d'Agincourt's book, where you will find a great number of outlines from these miniatures.

In judging these works you must not, however, form your opinion as to their merits entirely by d'Agincourt's illustrations. They give a very fair idea of the drawing and composition, but the charm of these small paintings lies in their color and execution, which are sometimes very beautiful.

The Bayeux tapestry, for instance, though charming in the original, becomes very uninteresting and ugly when translated into black and white.

The transition from Byzantine to Romanesque art was so gradual that it is very difficult to decide when the change took place. Byzantine rules and traditions had taken such firm root, that it was not till the end of the fourteenth century that its influence was finally overcome.

We are, however, approaching the time of Guido da Siena and Guinto da Pisa, and it is pleasant at last to know (or to suppose we know) the names of two artists after centuries of anonymous work. The fact of these names having been preserved shows at any rate that their bearers were not mere workmen bound to execute the morbid fancies of the Church, but painters of some repute, whose creations, though still very cramped and stiff, show better modelling and a more intelligent execution than are to be found in the works of their predecessors.

Every one has heard of Cimabue, but comparatively few have seen his frescoes. I imagine that his best work is in the Church of St. Francis at



Assisi. I once spent six weeks at Assisi, and devoted a good deal of time to the wall-paintings of the church.

The frescoes of Cimabue seemed to me infinitely better than his panel pictures, but they were (even then) in such a state of decay that it was difficult to form an opinion of them. This was twenty-two years ago, and since that time I believe that the progress of decay has been very rapid indeed. The Arundel Society had some admirable *fac-simile* drawings of these works executed five years ago.

It is curious how much more rapidly all the old frescoes are decaying now than formerly.

I attribute this accelerated rate of ruin to the presence of gas in the towns. At Pisa the Campo Santo frescoes are deteriorating much more rapidly than before the introduction of gas into the town. I don't know whether Assisi is now blessed with a gasometer, but if it is, poor old Cimabue's work is doomed.

His famous Madonna, which was carried in triumphant procession through the streets of Florence, is painted quite in the Greek style. The flesh is better modelled, and the draperies of the surrounding angels are much better drawn, than in any previous example of Byzantine work, but I cannot understand the enthusiasm of the Florentines.

The specimen we have in the National Gallery appears to me to have been much re-painted; the

heads especially (although ugly enough to be early work) are of a later character, and are painted in the fumbling, uncertain way which is characteristic of restorers.

There are other artists of this period whose works show a great improvement on the old Byzantine. These are Toriti, who executed some fine mosaics in Rome; the brothers Cosmati, also of Rome; and Gaddo Gaddi, the Florentine. The mosaics of the last named in the dome of the baptistery at Florence are very highly commended, but they appear to me rather improved Byzantine than true Romanesque. Indeed, with the single exception of Cimabue's frescoes at Assisi, I don't know of any work of the thirteenth century which has a true Romanesque character at all. Giotto was (as every one knows) the pupil of Cimabue, and I believe that the truth of the old story about Cimabue finding him when a shepherd boy occupied in drawing a sheep, and taking him back to Florence as an apprentice, has not yet been doubted. We can easily imagine the respect and awe which this shepherd lad would feel for the greatest painter of the capital, and can readily believe that the work of his early youth would be founded entirely on that of his master. It is more than probable that he served his apprenticeship at the great sanctuary of piety and art which arose after the death of St. Francis at Assisi. At any rate it is there that his earliest known, and to



my mind his best, works are to be found. The series of frescoes illustrative of the life of the saint, may be considered as the starting-point of historical painting in Italy. Compare the figures in these frescoes with the best work of Cimabue, and notice what an enormous advance has been made. Here we have natural, if somewhat timid, action, well-proportioned figures, and skilful arrangement of drapery. I confess I was surprised to hear that these works were anterior to his larger frescoes in the lower church, which represent the glorification of St. Francis, and which appeared to me to indicate a step backward toward Cimabue. It is probable that in these last-named frescoes, which adorn the compartments under the high altar, Giotto did not venture to depart much from the traditional arrangement of his predecessors, and accordingly we find the poor, meagre composition and the horizontal lines of heads cherished by the thirteenth century painters.

Giotto would require a whole lecture to himself, were I to attempt an account of what he did at Padua, Florence, Rome, and Naples. His *chefs-d'œuvre* are said to be in Florence, at the Church of St. Croce. No less than four chapels in this church were decorated by him ; but, alas ! there is very little left. Time, whitewash, and the restorers, have done their work pretty effectually. Still, the mere outlines of many of the groups show that

these works may very well have been the finest that the master ever produced.

I have seen the Arena Chapel at Padua, which is literally covered with Giotto's frescoes. It is many years since I was there, and very possibly, were I to revisit the chapel, I might form a different opinion, but at the time I was disappointed with the paintings, which appeared to me weak in design and feeble in execution.

When we recollect that Giotto had the customs and prejudices of eight centuries to contend against, no antiques at hand to guide and purify his taste, no great predecessors to imitate, we cannot help paying homage to the genius of the man who produced the St. Francis series of frescoes at Assisi, and numberless other works, both at Florence and elsewhere. I think that the true explanation of his wonderful success is to be found in the old sheep-drawing anecdote. It shows that even as a shepherd boy he felt that nature was the foundation of art. Instead of working by mere routine, like the Byzantine painters, or, like his master Cimabue, endeavoring to improve in the same direction, he went direct to nature both for his compositions, his action, and his drapery.

To us it may appear the simplest thing in the world to make studies from nature for our pictures, but in the time of Giotto such a course would be unusual, and would be placed in the category of happy thoughts.



It may be argued that if he had lived in the tenth or eleventh century instead of the fourteenth, he would never have been allowed by his patrons to attempt such daring innovations. He must have remained in the old beaten track. This is no doubt true enough, and there may have been during the dark ages a dozen embryo Giottoes whose genius had been strangled by ecclesiastical leading-strings ; but we are none the less indebted to the man who gave the death-blow to the barbarous mechanical craft which for long centuries had usurped the place of art.

Although anxious to do full justice to Giotto as a great art reformer, I must admit that he had some very unpleasant peculiarities which were blindly adopted, and, indeed, exaggerated, by many of his followers. The most repulsive of these peculiarities is the sameness and meanness of his heads. In the only specimen we have of his in the National Gallery this fault is not conspicuous, but it is very noticeable in the pictures of his school. Indeed, the family likeness which pervades all the heads in the large Orcagna is almost ludicrous. In Giottoesque heads the eyes are a great deal too close together and never fairly open. The nose is thin and pinched, and the jaws weak and shapeless. The type, in short, is diametrically the opposite of the antique, and is (it must be confessed) a very ignoble one.

The constant recurrence of this mean type is more

apparent in his later than in his early works, and it is probable that many of these stereotyped heads were executed by his assistants, but nevertheless Giotto is answerable for them.

Italian sculpture, as well as Italian painting, is greatly indebted to Giotto, for it was he who designed the reliefs for the bronze gates of the baptistery at Florence. These designs were executed in masterly style by Andrea Pisano, and may be looked upon as the starting-point of Italian sculpture. In fact, it is as the father of modern art rather than as a perfect painter that the name of Giotto ought to be held in reverence. Many of his successors of the next century, whom I shall mention in the course of my lectures, approached much nearer to perfection than did Giotto. The composition of their pictures is less archaic, the heads have more individual character and are much better drawn ; but we ought always to bear in mind, that had Giotto never lived, we should never have had a Masaccio, a Filippo Lippi, or a Beato Angelico, and probably neither a Leonardo nor a Raffaele.

Louis Quatorze is reported to have said : " L' état c' est moi " ; and Giotto might with equal truth have declared : " L' art Romanesque c' est moi," so all-pervading was his influence. Besides the works of his immediate followers, such as Taddeo Gaddi and Orcagna, Italy abounds with Giottesque frescoes, whose authors are unknown, or at least doubtful.

The most important of these nameless works are



the large frescoes which cover the walls of the Capella degli Spagnuoli, in Sta. Maria Novella at Florence. When I first saw these frescoes they were ascribed to Taddeo Gaddi and Simone Memmi of Siena; but modern critics have justly, I think, pronounced against this authorship. They appeared to me to be of a later date, but I may have been misled by the disgraceful way in which they have been retouched.

This retouching, or rather repainting, has been the ruin of many of the early frescoes, and it is most extraordinary that in Italy (of all places in the world) such barbarous mangling should ever have been allowed. The real culprits are not the obscure bunglers who did the work, but the ignorant monks or town councillors who employed them.

These Sta. Maria Novella frescoes are very characteristic of the allegorical mania of the Romanesque period. One of them, we are told, is meant to represent the "Wisdom of the Church," but the allegory is so obscure and the component parts so heterogeneous, that with the best intentions it is all but impossible to understand the painter's meaning. Why should Grammar have a globe in her hand? and why should Logic have a serpent under her veil? What has Abraham done that he should be associated with arithmetic? and why should John of Damascus (who, for some occult reason, typifies Hope) be mending his pen? If the strange jumble in this fresco is bewildering, what shall we say to

the companion fresco which represents "the activity of the Church"? A dozen or more different centres of activity are in full play simultaneously. The faithful are portrayed in one part of the fresco as men and women, and in another part as a flock of sheep. The Dominicans, or Dominicans, are playfully represented as black and white dogs, who are defending the sheep against wolves. St. Dominic himself is preaching against heretics, who are entreating pardon and burning their books; but it is hopeless to give an idea of the confusion of imagery, of the blending of piety with punning in this extraordinary fresco. If I again refer in the course of my lectures to the Romanesque allegories, it is not that I am fascinated by them, but because they are so numerous and so typical of the period that it is impossible to ignore them.

It would, of course, be unjust to blame the artists for these allegories, or for the numerous "Inferno" pictures. They probably had to execute and make the best of the subjects that were given them. Dante may very likely be answerable for much of the questionable taste of the fourteenth century.

I shall endeavor, in my next lecture, to steer a middle course between the modern blind adoration of the fifteenth century work, and the cynical Philistinism which can discover nothing worthy of notice in this interesting period.*

* For the reason stated in my preface, I have not thought it expedient to publish my lectures on the great masters of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries.



LECTURE III.

ON THE PAINTERS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

BEFORE proceeding to speak of the painters of the eighteenth century, it will not be out of place to give a general sketch of the state of the art toward the close of the seventeenth. I trust that in my last lecture I made it clear to you that after Rubens and Vandyke no painter of any talent appeared, to support the fame of the Flemish school, but that in the northern provinces of Flanders and in Holland a whole constellation of imitative painters arose, who, for truthful color and exquisite skill, have rarely been equalled, and never surpassed. This brilliant outburst of talent did not, however, last very long. Indeed, it may be said with truth, that all the best Dutch pictures were painted within the space of sixty years—from about 1620 to 1680. We then perceive a gradual decline of the school, not such a rapid decay as overtook the Antwerp and Brussels academies, but a perceptible inferiority both in the color and the handling; the former became more opaque and heavy, and less true, whilst the latter lost a good deal of its admirable dexterity.

✓ I know of no Dutch paintings of first-rate excellence unless it be some of Van Huysum's flower-pieces which were executed in the eighteenth century.

If we turn to Italy, we find the art of painting, which had been partially arrested in its downward course by the Eclectic and Naturalistic schools, now getting lower and lower. Devoid alike of original conception or good execution, the Italian painters of this time were little better than coarse decorators. When I say that Luca Giordano towers like a giant over his contemporaries, it will be easily understood what a pigmy race they must have been.

In France, Poussin, Lesueur, Lebrun, and Claude Gélée, all died in the latter half of the seventeenth century, leaving no worthy successors behind them.

Germany, owing perhaps to her long civil wars and political troubles, had produced no great artist since Holbein, and the English school was as yet non-existent, so we may easily comprehend the very low level to which art sank toward the beginning of the eighteenth century. When I say that the English school was non-existent in the seventeenth century, I do not mean that there were no painters in England. The Stuart princes were generally liberal patrons of art, but all the best painters patronized by them were foreigners. Vandyke, Sir Peter Lely, and even Sir G. Kneller, were all foreigners, and the country was inundated with

third-rate Flemish and Italian painters. Of the latter, Verrio is a good typical example. Charles II employed him to cover the ceilings and walls of his palaces with tasteless sprawling allegories, and we learn from Walpole that the sums paid by the king, or rather by the unfortunate country, for these wretched parodies of Italian decorative painting, were very considerable.

I think that of late years Sir Peter Lely has had scant justice done to his talent. A contemporary of Vandyke, his portraits have many points of resemblance with those of that master. His inferiority is chiefly noticeable in the hands, dresses, and accessories of his portraits, but his female heads are often very beautiful, and are singularly characteristic of the period.

Sir Godfrey Kneller, although he lived well into the eighteenth century, must be looked upon as a seventeenth-century painter, all his best work having been done when he was comparatively young. He is another of those predecessors of Reynolds whom it has been the fashion to villify and decry. I have seen portraits by Kneller which were infinitely better than much of the highly-praised portraiture of the last century; but unfortunately this clever though intensely vain artist regarded painting more as a lucrative trade than as a liberal profession. No one can wish that Kneller had devoted his talents to the stupid allegorical style then in fashion, instead of

sticking to portraits; but what may be wished is that he had been more conscientious, and less greedy for money, in the particular branch of art to which he devoted himself.

In speaking of court patronage I noticed that the painters encouraged by the Stuarts were all foreigners, but this does not seem to have been done from systematic neglect of native talent, but simply because no painters worthy of the name were born in England. The only real Englishman of the century who rose above mediocrity was William Dobson, and he had no reason to complain of want of royal patronage, for King Charles appointed him at a very early age to be court painter on the death of Van-dyke, and used to call him the English Tintoretto.

From what I have seen of Dobson's I don't think I should have compared him to Tintoretto. Nevertheless I consider him as a genuine artist, and had he not died at the age of thirty-six he would probably have achieved much greater fame.

I ought not to omit mentioning John Riley, whose work was often taken for Lely's. Walpole describes him as having been humble and modest, and adds that with a quarter of Kneller's vanity he might have persuaded the world that he was as great a master. I think the anecdote told of him greatly in his favor, that Charles II, after sitting to him, exclaimed, on seeing the picture, "Is this like me? then, oddsfish! I am an ugly fellow." In such an age of flattery and

falsehood it is quite refreshing to meet with an honest painter.

To give you an idea of the deplorable state of the art of painting toward the beginning of the eighteenth century, I will quote from Horace Walpole, who, although by no means a good art-critic, was a man of great taste and shrewdness. Speaking of the accession of the House of Hanover, he says:—"We are now arrived at the period in which the arts were sunk to the lowest ebb in Britain. From the stiffness introduced by Holbein and the Flemish masters we were fallen into a loose and (if I may use the word) dissolute kind of painting. Sir Godfrey Kneller still lived, but only in name, which he prostituted by suffering the most wretched daubings of hired substitutes to pass for his works, while at most he gave himself the trouble of painting the face of the person who sat to him. His successors thought they had caught his free manner when they neglected drawing and finishing."

Walpole goes on to deplore the frightful fashions of the period, and remarks that Dahl, D'Agar, Richardson, Jervas, and others, "rebuffed by such barbarous forms, and not possessing genius enough to deviate from what they saw, clothed all their personages with a loose drapery and airy mantles, which not only *were* not but *could* not be the dress of any age or nation. All these casual and loose wrappings were imitated from nothing; they seldom

have any folds or chiaroscuro, drawing and color being equally forgotten."

There are hundreds of these portraits still in existence, but they are generally relegated to attics and dark corridors of old country-seats, and no one ever thinks of looking at them. The owner does not like to make a bonfire of the effigies of his ancestors, but he stows them away where they will not be seen. Setting aside all questions of art, these insipid productions are valueless as likenesses. We feel that not only the dresses, but the faces themselves could not be of any age or nation.

Walpole, like most men of his time, cared but little about historical or decorative painting, and his remarks on the decadence of art relate solely to portraiture, but there is no doubt that figure-painting had deteriorated just as much.

George I, was totally devoid of taste, and the second George (as is well known) hated "boetry and bainting." The only employers of artists (I cannot call them patrons) were country gentlemen and a few noblemen who wanted their portraits painted. The wonder to me is, not that the portraits of Richardson and Jervas are so bad, but that they are not worse.

As the century proceeded, portrait-painting in England did not improve. We find that, between ✓1730 and 1750, Thomas Hudson was at the head of the profession, and no words can express better than

this fact how deep the art had sunk. The only representative of large historical painting at the beginning of the century was Sir James Thornhill. I do not feel for this artist the same antipathy that I do for his predecessors, Verrio and Laguerre. ✓

Indeed, I think that had Sir James lived at any other period he would have become a really great artist.

He was a very fair draughtsman, and understood the art of grouping with taste and dignity ; but he had not the genius necessary to break away altogether from the ignoble style of his day.

It would be a profitless task to enumerate the crowd of insipid foreign painters who found a market for their work in England during the first half of the eighteenth century. I prefer passing on at once to Hogarth, who stands up like a giant amongst his dwarfish contemporaries. ✓ *He* at any rate possessed original genius, and his manual skill, though inferior to that of the best Dutchmen, was by no means contemptible. His portraits are amongst the best and most characteristic of the century, and I can find nothing in his attempts at a higher kind of art, as illustrated by his " Sigismunda " (in the National Gallery), to justify either the savage onslaught of Walpole or the contemptuous pity of Reynolds. On the contrary, it appears to me that this much-abused picture is a very respectable performance, and I fail to see any presumption in a skilful and accomplished

artist like Hogarth seeking to escape from the loathsome task of always painting scenes of vice, misery, or folly.

Sir Joshua ought to have recollected his own "Death of Dido," and other attempts in what he calls "the great historical style," before taxing Hogarth with imprudence and presumption.

As in these lectures I have often ventured to criticise, and, as some may think, to speak disrespectfully of our first President and his discourses, I should like to state that though I do not admire his pictures as universally as some do, I consider him to have been a thorough artist ; by which I mean that he was saturated with love for his profession. To him, painting, instead of being a task, was the greatest pleasure in life, and in pursuit of this pleasure he was indefatigable. We owe him a deep debt of gratitude as the great regenerator of art in this country.

✓ The great French art-reformer, David, went back to the antique, and to nature (who is older still) ; and this seems to me the more logical method. But there is no doubt that, practically (considering Sir Joshua's own idiosyncrasies and the state in which he found English portraiture), an intelligent study of the old masters was the best rope for hauling British art off the mudbank on which she had so long been stranded.

The name of Reynolds as a portrait-painter is

almost as much respected abroad as it is here. Most of his work is faded and otherwise much deteriorated, but fortunately the excellent engravings of his portraits will to all ages preserve his fame as a man of great power, taste, and refinement.

I confess myself quite unable to appreciate Gainsborough's pictures as they are at present appreciated. I don't mean to say that I undervalue *all* his work. I have seen heads by him which I admired exceedingly, but I must protest against the blind fetishism which would compel us to accept as good work any weak, trashy picture which bears his name. I have read laudatory notices both of him and Romney which would tempt one to say with Borachio, "See what a deformed thief this Fashion is!"

I would recommend young artists to bear in mind a pithy old saying, to the effect that "One man may steal a horse while another may not look over the hedge"; and to beware of treating landscape, or portraiture either, in the Gainsborough style. Should they be misled into any thing of the kind, they will find to their cost that the loose, flimsy manner which is greatly admired in the fashionable painter of the last century, will not be tolerated for one instant in a modern picture.

Amongst the early members of this Academy, Cotes, Dance, and Ramsay were all portrait-painters, who have, in my opinion, fully as good a right to

celebrity as Gainsborough ; but their merits are ignored, whilst inferior works attributed to Gainsborough fetch thousands of pounds.

Amongst the figure-painters of the eighteenth-century academicians, I consider Copley to have been far the best. When I compare his honest, manly work with that of his contemporaries, Angelica Kaufman and West, I am always struck by its immeasurable superiority. Indeed, considering that portraiture had been the only branch of the art cultivated in England since the days of Holbein, and bearing in mind how figure-drawing had been neglected, I look upon Copley's pictures with something like admiration.

I cannot feel the same respect for Barry's paintings at the Adelphi, although the effort evinced in these paintings is worthy of all praise. It was a much-needed protest against the all-absorbing fashionable portraiture of the day ; but unfortunately the artist's drawing was neither correct nor refined enough for this kind of work, and I fear it must be allowed that the execution of these heroic subjects is both weak and pretentious. In my opinion there are but two English figure-painters of the eighteenth century whose merit would be acknowledged by an intelligent foreign critic—by one, in short, who was ignorant of the market value of pictures, and whose judgment was, therefore, wholly unbiased. These two painters would be Hogarth and Copley.

We will now see what sort of artists this century of puff and powder produced in France.

In France the seventeenth century had been a very remarkable period for art, for it was then that Poussin, Lesueur, Claude Gelée, and Lebrun all lived and died. Thus, while in England all historical and landscape painting was a complete blank, France produced some of the greatest artists that have ever lived. They (at least three of them, Poussin, Lesueur, and Claude) were great in the largest sense of the word. Classic, religious, and landscape painting must always, *ceteris paribus*, take precedence of homely genre and prosaic portraiture. Invention is a higher quality than power of imitation, particularly when, as in the case of these three painters, the inventive power flowed without effort and was exercised with rare taste and judgment. With these three great artists I coupled Lebrun, not because I consider him by any means their equal, but because he was the founder of a good deal of the art which found favor in France during the eighteenth century. It is with this century that we have to deal; so, without further preamble, I will begin with Jean Jouvenet. ✓

This artist (but little known out of France) narrowly escaped becoming a great painter. His early pictures have a good deal of Poussin's classical manner about them. Lebrun thought so highly of the young artist that he employed him as an

assistant in the large battle-pieces he was executing for Louis XIV at Versailles.

Here he no doubt acquired a good deal of Lebrun's vigor and facility, but lost the pure taste and classical feeling he had derived from Poussin. He was a very prolific painter, and all his works are either life-size or larger than life. They are remarkably well drawn and vigorously colored, but they lack the one quality which makes Lesueur's work so attractive, viz., simplicity and reverential feeling.

It is by no means necessary that the painter of religious subjects should be an ascetic, nor even what is commonly called a religious man, but it is necessary that he should import into his work some of the spirit of Christianity, just as it is necessary for the painter of pagan heroes and nymphs to imbue himself with the spirit of classical art until it becomes a second nature to him.

In Jouvenet's numerous pictures of New Testament subjects the action is too violent, and the painter has evidently thought more about displaying his own skill than doing justice to his subject.

In Rubens' Biblical pictures we often find the same kind of vulgar bustle and common types, but every thing is pardoned to Rubens on account of his brilliant color.

Jouvenet's color, though fairly good, was not of that transcendent quality which would condone his very unbiblical style of composition.



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With all his faults, Jouvenet is rather a favorite of mine. I like his thoroughly masculine style of work, and I admire his indomitable pluck and industry. It is related of him that some ten years before his death he became afflicted with paralysis, which completely crippled his right arm. He then took to painting with his left, and on recovering partially the use of his right fingers he used to hold his brush in his right hand and guide it with his left. It is said that the work thus done is hardly inferior to what he produced before his paralysis. Contrast this devotion and love for his art with the tradesman-like indifference of the English face-painters, of the Knelers, the Jervases, and the Richardsons, and others who, as soon as they had acquired wealth, shirked work as much as possible.

Antoine Watteau is another artist of great power and originality, who made a very marked impression on the Continental schools of the eighteenth century. Although he died at the early age of thirty-seven he became quite a *chef d'école*. Lancret was the best of his imitators, but dexterous and clever as Lancret's pictures are, they hardly equal the best of Watteau's. We have often read and heard about the humble beginnings of artists, who subsequently became famous, but the poverty and squalor of Watteau's student life have, I should think, never been rivalled. He left his native town, Valenciennes, for Paris without money and with hardly a rag to cover him.

With difficulty he obtained work at a kind of sign-painter's, whose principal business was in the religious votive picture line. A number of young students were employed by this dealer, and quantity was more insisted on than quality. Watteau got three francs a week, and as he was an excellent workman he had a bowl of soup given him every day. He did not stay very long with this man, but for many years his poverty compelled him to work for others. During all this time he never ceased taking every opportunity of sketching from nature, and thus laid the foundations of his subsequent extraordinary facility. Ultimately he was fortunate enough to meet with the best kind of patron, not a pompous big-wig who condescended to sit for his portrait, but a gentleman who possessed a first-class collection of drawings by the old masters, and who allowed Watteau to sketch and copy to his heart's content. This completed our artist's education. He formed his style of color on P. Veronese and Rubens, but his elegant and *spirituel* drawing and the crisp dexterity of his touch were all his own. It may surprise some to hear that the painter of the frivolous, masquerading scenes and of the foppish humors of his day was of a mild and rather melancholy disposition, longing for the quiet of a country life, and the unsophisticated joys of a poultry-yard and cabbage-garden. Watteau's fame increased after his death, when it was found that not one of his numerous imitators could

equal him. This fame was completely swept away by the great classical wave which deluged France toward the close of the century. This wave in its turn receded, and Watteau is now again at high-water mark.

The able French critic, M. Villot, asks apropos of this flux and reflux of popular estimation—"Pourquoi ne pas rendre justice en tout temps (quel que soit le genre, quelle que soit la forme) à l'originalité, à la force, au sentiment, en un mot au vrai génie?" The answer is, Who is to determine what "vrai génie" is? It is just because the art-world in the time of David could see no genius in Watteau that they treated his work with the most ignominious contempt, and it is because the present French school is intensely anticlassical that the paintings of the first Empire are looked upon with loathing. I am afraid that fashion rules public opinion in art as much as she does in dress.

There are very few artists and still fewer critics who can (like M. Villot) give an unprejudiced opinion about two such dissimilar painters as Watteau and David.

They (like politicians) take either one side or the other. They are swayed by party, and we all know what that means. We all know the respectful homage paid by Liberals to Conservatives, and *vice versa*.

I now come to the painters who are most typical of the eighteenth century. These were the brothers

Vanloo and Boucher. I group them together, as their style and the subjects they treated were so similar that for my purpose these three or four painters may be treated as one.

Gifted with a marvellous facility of brush, with great industry, and with no scruples about purity of style, these facile decorative painters got through an incredible amount of work. Boucher especially fairly glutted the market with pictures and drawings of every conceivable subject, and as (although a man of pleasure) he made it a rule to work ten hours a day, it may be understood that a good deal of this work was mechanical and commonplace.

The color of all the pictures of this school is as fictitious as the drawing, but for all that it is not disagreeable from a decorative point of view ; and none but very clever men could have ignored nature with so little impunity. When I was a student in Paris, the traditions of the David school had not died out, and to call an artist a Boucher or a Vanloo was the *ne plus ultra* of insult. Old David himself, however, seems to have been more just to Boucher, for when one of his fanatical classical followers was railing against that master, " I can tell you," says David, " that it is not given to every one to be a Boucher." No doubt he was right. It is *not* given to every one to produce over 10,000 works of art, none of which can be said to be much below mediocrity, and some greatly above it.

Boucher, and even the much-abused Vanloo, were infinitely better painters in every respect than any artist Italy could produce at this period. They at any rate had a style of their own, which is more than can be said for Maratti, Pomponi, and the other miserable followers of the once great Italian school.

The style was neither noble nor pure, but it was all the better suited for the decoration of Louis XV apartments. Another figure-painter contemporary with Boucher and the Vanloos was Greuze. ✓

This artist is a very striking illustration of the power of fashion over the popularity of a painter. It is not many years ago since a good specimen of Greuze was worth more than a fine Rembrandt or Van der Helst. This strange Greuze mania lasted a few years, and then happily died gradually away.

There is a certain prettiness about his female heads, and I have seen portraits by him which were remarkably good ; but his pictures, such as " The Malédiction paternelle " and the " Fils puni," are a curious mixture of nambypambyism and melodrama.

There were two popular engravings of these pictures, which in Louis Philippe's time were great favorites with the lower bourgeoisie ; and it was curious to note how universally they were disliked by all artists, and how universally admired by all retired grocers, pork-butchers, and shopkeepers in general.

His *chef-d'œuvre* is supposed to be the " Cruche

cassee" at the Louvre ; and during the Greuze epidemic, hundreds of copies were made of this (to me) rather offensive picture.

✓ I shall reserve David and his school for my next lecture, but before finishing what I have to say about the French artists of the eighteenth century, I wish to mention the portrait-painter Rigaud, and one or two landscape-painters. Portrait-painting in France was never debased to a trade as it was in England. Many of the historical painters I have mentioned executed portraits, and very fine ones too, but the best portraitist of the century was Hyacinthe Rigaud. His full-length of Louis XIV is really a grand work. His biographer informs us that he worked with his brush for sixty-two years, and averaged thirty portraits a year during the whole of that period. In addition to this he made a point of retouching the numerous copies and replicas which were made of his royal portraits. He painted five kings and innumerable princes and scions of royal blood. Probably no artist ever lived who painted so many great personages, or who gave such general satisfaction. No man, however, could possibly get through such a colossal amount of work without the quality suffering, and there is in Rigaud's portraits of minor personages a monotony and mechanical sameness which is very tiresome, although I never yet saw a portrait by Rigaud which was ill drawn or badly posed.



It appears that this excellent artist distinguished himself in early life by his careful academical studies—studies which he continued long after he became well known as a portrait-painter; and the good results of this training are evident from the masterly treatment of the hands and all the accessories in his portraits. It is strange that Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was liberal enough (at any rate toward artists who were no longer living), should never have mentioned the portraits of Rigaud.

Another excellent French painter of the eighteenth century was Joseph Vernet, the father of Carle and grandfather of Horace Vernet. His views of the seaports of France are evidence of his honest style of work and indefatigable industry. An able French critic, speaking of these and other numerous sea-pieces by Vernet, remarks that although he may not have the delicacy of touch possessed by Vanderveelde, nor the glowing color of Claude, yet no landscape painter ever was more thorough and uniformly good than Vernet. His figures are always admirably arranged, and painted with great skill, and his way of viewing nature was simple, unaffected, and broad. Unfortunately his pictures have become very dark and brown, and the hanging of all the seaport views together in one gallery is not a happy arrangement. One's first impression, on entering the room, is that they are a collection of old maps, and it is only after close and patient examination that their good qualities became apparent.

✓ Hubert Robert was another of the conscientious and indefatigable workers of the eighteenth century, whose pictures are hardly known at all in England. His forte was the delineation of old Roman buildings, and the Louvre possesses several examples of his careful, honest work. On account of his great reputation as an architect, he was much employed by Louis XV at Versailles, in designing the garden terraces and park buildings, and it was probably on this account that he was looked upon as a Royalist, and thrown into prison at the time of the great Revolution. There he remained for ten months, employing his time in sketching and painting his fellow-prisoners. Although he expected every day to be carted off to the guillotine, the pictures and portraits which he executed at this terrible time show no sign of careless haste or nervous indecision. They are extremely valuable as being true records of the scenes which took place in the prisons, but they are seldom seen in public galleries, as they were given by the painter to his companions in misfortune, and are treasured as heirlooms by their descendants.

When I mention that our painter was sixty years old at the time, I think it will be conceded that he was made of the right stuff.

Having exhausted what I can afford time to say about the French schools of the eighteenth century, I would gladly pick out a few Italian painters of merit of that period, but I find it utterly impossible

to do so. They were a race of bad copyists, without a spark of originality or independence of feeling. They had traditional receipts for covering large wall-spaces with figures in the Pietro di Cortona and Carlo Maratti style; and as the century wore on, these "pasticcios" became more and more insipid and commonplace. It is better by far to have a style of one's own, though it be frivolous like Watteau's, or artificial like Boucher's, than to go on manufacturing pictures by routine. The only exception I know of to the universal decrepitude of the Italian eighteenth-century painters is Canaletti. He may not have been a great genius, but, at any rate, he was not an imitator of others, and his canal views of Venice are a great deal more truthful than any I have ever seen. ✓

I am aware that his way of painting a ripple on the water was too mechanical, but his buildings are admirable; and whenever I go to Venice I am always more reminded of Canaletti's pictures than of Turner's. I am not expressing the heretical opinion that Canaletti was a greater *artist* than Turner. I am merely stating, as a matter of fact, that Canaletti's Venice is much more like the real place than Turner's; and it appears to me that an architectural painter should (of all painters) adhere strictly to local truth.

I cannot find amongst the German painters of the eighteenth century one single artist of first-rate ex- //

cellence. All the national talent seems to have found expression in the sister art of music. We find Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and a host of other musical giants, but not one man of exceptional stature amongst the painters.

↓ Raphael Mengs was undoubtedly the best. Kugler tells us that from his twelfth year he was set to draw from the finest antiques, and from the masterpieces of M. Angelo and Raffaello. He afterward studied color from Titian, chiaroscuro from Correggio, and so on. In short, he had a most thorough and systematic art education. He was a painstaking and intelligent man, and yet, though crammed with knowledge, he failed to leave a great name. The truth appears to be that he lacked originality and self-dependence. His pictures, therefore, though almost faultless in composition and drawing, are somehow cold and unsatisfactory.

↓ Then there is Dietrich, whose peculiar talent lay in the imitation of other masters. Rembrandt, Ostade, and many other Dutch masters were most closely imitated by this artist.

↓ Denner, the most minute finisher that ever lived, and Sieboldt the portrait-painter, who had a smooth, highly polished manner of painting (not unlike Denner's), pretty well exhaust the list of popular artists in Germany.

In the Netherlands, as I have already stated, the race of charming "genre" and landscape painters

died out with the seventeenth century, but Van Huysum and his followers Roepel and Van Os carried the art of flower- and fruit-painting to a point which it never reached before. ✓

Many of the Italian painters of this century were very fond of introducing festoons of flowers in their pictures, and Boucher was pretty liberal too of Pompadour roses, but these floral accessories were treated in a decorative fashion, and could not be compared to Van Huysum's exquisitely finished and richly colored flower pieces.

To summarize what I have said about eighteenth-century painting, we find in England a very low level of dull portraiture until Reynolds revolutionized the art; historical painting altogether absent; incident painting with only one good representative (Hogarth), and landscape-painting also with only one (Richard Wilson), unless we count Crome, Cotman, and Constable as belonging to this century. It will, however, be observed, that during the latter half of the century, art was in a continued state of progress. The portraits which satisfied the public of the early Georges were no longer tolerated. Landscape art was seriously studied, and even what is called historical painting was feebly struggling into life.

In France, on the contrary, we find the art barometer falling during the century, until the fall was rudely arrested by David. Her painters were incomparably superior to ours in the early part of the

century, but the all-pervading influence of the Van-loos and Bouchers demoralized fatally the whole school, and prepared the way for the great classical revival.

Art was in a woful plight in Italy, hardly any better in Germany, and dead or not yet born in other countries. So that the eighteenth century, or at least the greater part of it, may be described in meteorological language as a widespread depression. This depression has, however, long passed away, and it rests with the coming generation of painters to take care that it should not occur again. We cannot control the weather. When a telegram is received from New York announcing "a disturbance which will develop energy" (meaning in plain English that we must look out for squalls), we cannot avert the coming storm; but when we are threatened from Paris, Vienna, or Rome, with an epidemic of false or meretricious art, we *can* resist the temptation of following, like the sheep of Panurge, any cracked bell-wether who may happen to be in fashion. Let every young artist work hard and conscientiously, and when he has thoroughly learned the technical part of his profession and stored his mind with knowledge likely to be useful to him, let him determine to carry out his own ideas, regardless whether they happen to coincide with the prevailing craze of the day, and I will venture to prophesy that no such a collapse of art as afflicted the first half of the eighteenth century will ever occur again.



LECTURE IV.

"DAVID" AND HIS SCHOOL.

IN my last lecture I traced the progress or rather the retrogression of the French school of painting during the eighteenth century. I explained how, beginning fairly well with such painters as Lebrun, Sebastian, Bourdon, and Rigaud, the school gradually degenerated, and lost all traces of the pure and noble style of Poussin and Lesueur. Boucher and the numerous tribe of the Vanloos deluged the country with a species of art which, however suitable for decorative purposes in Louis XV galleries and boudoirs, could not be called historical painting, and the false sentiment, conventional color, and meretricious style peculiar to the school (if pardonable in the original founders) became unendurable in their followers and imitators. It is not surprising, therefore, that almost simultaneously with the great national Revolution, an art revolution should also have occurred.

At the time of *our* great Revolution, when we set the example of beheading royalty, Cromwell and his Roundheads were antagonistic to all art (at least to all painting), and no revival was possible. A gloomy

Puritanism would tolerate nothing but dull portraiture. In France, however, the case was different. Atheism and the worship of the goddess of Reason, though, of course, antagonistic to religious art, were not opposed to pagan or classic painting, and in the interval immediately preceding the establishment of the Empire, art suffered no discouragement.

On the contrary, every thing was done to enlist the services of the best painters toward the glorification of the new régime ; and as David, the most able artist of his day, happened to be an enthusiastic student of the antique, it is not surprising that he acquired unlimited influence over the school.

Artists (particularly when they are such men as David) do not spring up, like mushrooms, in a day, and it may surprise some to hear that he was born as early as 1748, and had therefore reached the mature age of forty-four when the Revolution broke out. He received his artistic education in the atelier of Vien. That painter, though not free altogether from the mannerism of the period, adhered more closely to nature than did the painters of the Vanloo school.

Vien rose to great eminence under Louis XVI, and held for many years the directorship of the French Academy at Rome. His pupil, David, having after three unsuccessful attempts at last obtained the prix de Rome, accompanied his master, and it was not till his residence in Rome that he finally and

completely emancipated himself from the Vanloo school. His study from the antique was unremitting. He drew more than he painted, but the few pictures he executed at this period were the best he ever did. I know of nothing in the whole range of art more exquisite in arrangement and drawing than the drapery of the woman in his "Belisarius." This and several other excellent pictures were bought by Louis XVI, and the Count d'Artois, afterward Charles X, so that David in his best time was any thing but a ferocious revolutionist.

When the terrible time at last came, David appears to have given up his art, and to have joined the party of Robespierre. His biographer says, "*Il se laissa entraîner,*" but there is no doubt that he was a willing convert, and his name is associated with some of the most atrocious acts of the Jacobins. It is possible that, having once connected himself with that sanguinary set, he found he could not draw back, and *must* be as cruel and ferocious as his colleagues. It is difficult to believe that a man who had such an exquisite and refined taste for form (and especially the human form) should have taken a pleasure in ordering wholesale executions.

After narrowly escaping the fate of his friend Robespierre, he wisely returned to art and humanity; nor did he ever afterward take any share in the political convulsions of his country. He was much patronized by the first Napoleon, as the huge

official pictures at Versailles amply testify. Official pictures, particularly during the hideous fashions which marked the Empire, must have been very awkward things to undertake, and David, with all his good qualities, had not the gift of color, which alone could enliven and give interest to such subjects as the crowning of Napoleon and the distribution of the eagles to the troops.

He had, however, *one* quality in the highest perfection, and that was drawing. His monochrome cartoon for the great coronation picture is really a wonderful production. All the figures are completely nude, and it is a pity that his pontiffs, princes, and ambassadors could not be left in the state in which he first drew them from Academy models.

When he came to draw figures in violent action, as in his "Romans and Sabines" and the "Leonidas," his drawing becomes rather stiff and constrained. This, coupled with his disagreeable color, makes these pictures odious in the sight of most artists, and to none more odious than to Frenchmen. But even in these works, if individual portions, heads, arms, and legs, are examined critically, it will be found how thoroughly masterly the drawing is. There is in his figures no display of anatomy (which display, by the way, generally indicates *ignorance* rather than knowledge of anatomy), no ugly realism perpetuating the bunions and other deformities of his models; and, on the other hand, none of that



fictitious decorative style of drawing which is so characteristic of Louis XV painters. David was a very great draughtsman, not exactly in the sense in which M. Angelo is considered a great draughtsman. He was singularly deficient in imagination, in power of grouping, and in poetic feeling ; but probably no man ever lived who could paint so good an Academy figure. It may also be said of him, that he was not only a great master of drawing, but a great drawing-master. Such a man was sadly wanted after the demoralization of eighteenth century art ; and, notwithstanding the jeers of the modern realists, I maintain that the pre-eminence of the French historical painters over those of other nations during the better part of this century is entirely due to old David and his teaching. Amongst his actual pupils may be mentioned Girodet, Drouais, Gros, Gérard, and Ingres ; but his influence extended far beyond the walls of his atelier, and it is no exaggeration to say that the correct and refined though manly style of drawing inaugurated by David permeated the whole French school.

Of the above-mentioned pupils Drouais was undoubtedly the most promising. His picture of the "Canaanitish Woman," which is now at the Louvre, was his "prix de Rome" work, corresponding to our gold-medal pictures, and it certainly is a most remarkable work for a young man. It has very little of the stiff academic manner about it. More-

over, there is a feeling for color in it which is very rare in the David school. Unfortunately Drouais died in his twenty-fifth year, and France lost a man who fairly promised to be one of the greatest painters she ever had.

Gérard followed pretty closely in the footsteps of his master. His touch, however, was softer, and his color less unpleasant. Moreover, he abandoned Greek and Roman warriors, and painted a great variety of more pleasing subjects, from "Cupid and Psyche" down to the "Entry of Henry IV into Paris."

Pierre Guérin was another artist of this group, who, although not a pupil of David, adopted his style completely. Guérin was an excellent draughtsman, but his taste in composition was theatrical, and in almost all his pictures his figures have a stagey look, as if they were on the boards of the Théâtre Français, declaiming Racine. His picture of "Phèdre and Hyppolite" is a good example of this histrionic tendency.

Both Gérard and Guérin were content to emulate not only the fine drawing of the master, but his false, unpleasant color, and their figures have, like David's, rather the appearance of painted statues. Moreover, there is a degree of effeminacy about such pictures as the "Cupid and Psyche" of Gérard, and the "Dido and Æneas" of Guérin which we never find in old David's work. Neither of these



painters appears to me to have in any way improved on the style of their master, whereas Girodet, Gros, and Ingres grafted on to the correct drawing of David qualities of their own.

Girodet emancipated himself completely from the stiff academic attitudes which David gave to his figures when he wanted to depict action. The scene from the "Deluge" (which every one who has been to the Louvre must have seen) is outrageously artificial ; nevertheless, supposing it possible that a family of antediluvians should have performed the acrobatic feat here depicted, the action in all the figures is perfectly true. Moreover, there is a freedom and spirit about the attitudes which we do not find in David's work.

This picture competed with David's "Romans and Sabines" for the grand decennial prize given in 1810, and the judges very justly gave the prize to Girodet. In the "Endymion" and the "Burial of Atala," both at the Louvre, Girodet deserted the David system of coloring and adopted a color suitable to the subjects, which to my thinking is very impressive and poetic.

The dead Atala is a most lovely creation, perfect in every way. Indeed, I consider it to be the *chef-d'œuvre* of the whole school. Girodet's talent for composition was very great. He illustrated Virgil, Anacreon, Racine, and other poets with exquisite taste and skill. I have seen some of these illustra-

tions. They are more picturesque than Flaxman's, and much more refined in drawing. Girodet was himself a poet of no mean order, and his translations from the Greek classics proves him to have been an accomplished scholar.

I should have much liked to have illustrated what I have been saying about these really great artists with a few engravings from their works. When I was a student in Paris one might have picked up any number of them from the portfolios on the quays, but now they are extremely scarce. The school has long since gone out of fashion in France, and in England it never was in fashion.

Before proceeding to speak of Gros, Ingres, and Granet, who, although pupils of David, departed gradually from their master's style, I should like to notice two painters, Prudhon and Géricault, whose art was altogether antagonistic to the stiff classicism of the period.

The former went to Rome in 1782, and, unlike his countrymen, devoted his time to the study of the old masters instead of adhering to nature and the antique. There is a pretty and true anecdote connected with this journey to Rome, which I should like to tell you. Whilst competing for the *prix de Rome*, one of his fellow-competitors was taken ill and was obliged to give up. Prudhon, out of compassion for the poor fellow, who had over-worked himself, left his own picture and finished his



rival's in such a style that he gained him the prize. The successful candidate was, however, not to be outdone in generosity, so he told the whole story to the judges, assuring them that had it not been for Prudhon's assistance, his picture would by no means have been the best. Upon hearing this, the judges revised their decision, and declared Prudhon to be the victor.

I am not aware whether so much generosity on the one hand, and modesty on the other, is common amongst prize candidates and gold medallists. I fancy it is the exception rather than the rule, and this must be my excuse for relating the story.

Prudhon's pictures are very inferior to his small drawings. He never was a thorough draughtsman like his contemporaries, and when he attempted life-size figures, the form becomes incorrect and very vague. His favorite masters appear to have been Correggio and Andrea del Sarto, but he exaggerated their softness until his figures lost all texture and appeared to be made of cotton wool.

In aiming at breadth, he again overshot the mark. Simplicity is a very desirable quality, and one which is rarely found in our Academy schools, but at the same time, when carried to such extremes as in Prudhon's "Crucifixion" it degenerates into mannerism. Of his small drawings I cannot speak too highly. They are greatly admired in France, but little known in England.

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The other eccentric nonconformist to the David tradition, namely, Géricault, is much better known in England than Prudhon. His famous picture of the "Medusa Raft" was not liked when first exhibited in Paris. It was brought over to London, where it was much more appreciated. On its return to Paris, M. de Forbin, the director of the national collection, in vain urged the government to purchase it. It was disliked by Louis XVIII's ministers, and it took M. de Forbin three years to persuade them to grant £200 for its purchase. After this it suddenly rose to great popularity, which went on increasing until my student days, when it was universally acknowledged to be the *chef-d'œuvre* of the modern French school. It is no doubt a fine, vigorous work, full of action and energy, but my enthusiasm was always rather cold compared to that of my fellow-students. Its realism appears to me to lie more in the execution than in the conception. It is too melodramatic to be true. We admire the technical qualities of the painting, the vigorous drawing, and the appropriate, if somewhat sombre, color, but somehow we feel that the *mise en scène* lacks truth, that the painter has thought more about displaying his own power than realizing the dreadful scene he had to depict. Compared with the artificial, classical works of David, this picture is nature itself; but measured by the modern standard of pictorial truth, it must be confessed that it is not quite satisfactory. The sea



ought surely in such a subject to play an important part. We miss altogether the long swell which always follows a storm, and the helpless condition of a rude raft as it plunges and rises on the big waves. Géricault's single wave, which threatens to break over the raft, is a pasteboard, theatrical one, which need cause no alarm. To criticise the setting of the sail from a nautical point of view would be too matter-of-fact; but I cannot help thinking that if the canvas had been listlessly flapping, and consequently useless as a sail, the picture would have been truer, and therefore more touching.

Géricault's other works in the Louvre are rather gigantic sketches than pictures. They all evince great power and facility, but the action is generally unnecessarily violent, and the relative proportion between man and horse not properly observed. In spite of his faults, Géricault was, however, a very great artist, and may justly be considered as the founder of the *école romantique*, which subsequently developed itself so greatly in France.

We now come to Gros, who, although originally a pupil of David, abandoned in after-life the style of his master. Gros spent a good deal of his youth in Italy, and having pleased Buonaparte by a picture representing the battle of the Bridge of Arcola, the young general attached him to his staff, and thus fixed the painter's career.

Every one who has been to Paris knows the gigan-

tic pictures commemorative of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign, the "Pestiferés de Jaffa," the "Bataille des Pyramides," and last, though not least, the "Bataille d'Aboukir." This picture may be accepted as the *chef-d'œuvre* of that noble style of battle-painting which is intermediate between the academic manner of David and the thoroughly naturalistic style of modern battle-painters. The composition of this picture has always struck me as being most masterly, and I strongly recommend all students to study the subtle manner in which the lines of the groups and the masses of light and shade are made to express the action, quite independent of the individual attitudes. Murat, who is charging at the head of the French cavalry, looks like the forerunner of a great wave which is about to break over the unfortunate Turks, and the whole composition, viewed as a composition, is a masterpiece. The relative proportions of the figures are not properly observed, but the spirit and skill displayed are so great that this fault passes almost unnoticed. I do not wish to under-rate the battle-pieces of H. Vernet, Bellanger, and Raffet, and I admire exceedingly those of De Neuville, but I must say that the art which could produce on canvas such an epic poem as this "Bataille d'Aboukir" is of a higher quality; and when we recollect that the figures are considerably larger than life, our respect and admiration for old Gros must be proportionately increased. When considerably past



fifty, Gros went to Brussels to visit his old master, David, who was living there in exile, and for whom he had always entertained the greatest affection.

Unfortunately for Gros, he allowed himself to be persuaded by the old man to give up painting modern battles, and to go back to the Greeks and Romans. A few attempts in this direction, made by Gros on his return to Paris, were so severely criticised, and greeted with such roars of laughter, that poor Gros drowned himself from sheer vexation. A coroner's jury would have justly returned a verdict of temporary insanity, for previous to his suicide Gros had shown many symptoms of mental aberration independent of his egregiously bad pictures.

His rival Ingres survived him for thirty years. This painter (also a pupil of David) departed from the master's style, but in quite a different direction to that taken by Gros. Slow, laborious, and fastidious, he was a long time before gaining the front rank of French painters, which, however, when once gained he kept for forty years. He largely modified the David interpretation of the antique by studying the works of Raffaele, and importing into his own much of the simplicity, dignity, and grace which characterize the best works of the great Roman painter. He deserves, however, more honor as the founder of a school than as a great painter. He may be said to have supplemented the schooling in draughtsmanship which the French artists got under

David. I can name but one *very* great artist amongst his pupils, namely, Flandrin, but there is no doubt that his severe and dignified style influenced, perhaps unconsciously, most of his younger contemporaries. My own master, P. Delaroche, was eclectic in his art ; that is, he endeavored to unite the spirit and life of Gros with the severe drawing of Ingres. He was not always very successful in the attempt, but fortunately he had qualities of his own which will rescue his fame from the fate which attends that of most eclectic artists.

These qualities were great dramatic power and exquisite taste in the arrangement of his figures. I can bear witness to the care he bestowed on composition, never grudging time or labor if he could in any way improve the action of his figures or the outline of his groups. I have known him to efface no less than seventeen finished figures during the progress of his great mural painting at the Ecole des Beaux Arts ; thus destroying at least two months' work, simply because he was dissatisfied with the grouping.

His atelier was about equally divided between the Ingrests and the partisans of the *école romantique*, but although a few men of extreme views would often quarrel over the respective merits of Ingres and Delacroix, the great majority were much better employed in endeavoring to draw and paint the model they had before them.



Some of Ingres' portraits are fine works of art, but they want life. Old David's portrait of "Pius VII" is far better than Ingres' best. I consider the *chef-d'œuvre* of Ingres to be the painting which he executed for one of the ceilings of the Louvre, representing the "Apotheosis of Homer." This work has been removed to where it can be seen more comfortably, but when *in situ* it looked very noble and dignified, especially when contrasted with the trashy commonplace *plafonds* of the neighboring rooms.

Many a young student has gazed with admiration at this work until he got a pain in his neck, and it is the powerful influence for good which the "Apotheosis of Homer" had on the then rising generation which constitutes Ingres' best claim to the celebrity he enjoyed during a long life.

Surprise has been recently expressed at Ingres' prejudice against anatomy. It is perfectly true that he disliked the look of a skeleton, and small blame to him, but I don't think he was opposed to any of the students consulting the anatomical figure. He had never learned any thing about either bones or muscles himself, and therefore could not see any benefit to be derived from the study. His contempt for anatomy as an adjunct to art was shared by a good many other French masters, nor can I much wonder at it when I recollect the courses of anatomy we used to attend. A professor from the

Ecole de Médecine would give a dozen dry lectures on the bones and muscles, just as if he were addressing a lot of medical students who would be called upon in after years to perform difficult surgical operations.

What would interest us, and be of use to us as artists, was never mentioned.

I don't know whether a more artistic kind of anatomy is now taught in Paris ; if not, I sympathize greatly with the students who attend the lectures.

Another pupil of David's who for a few years made a great sensation was Leopold Robert, the painter of "The Pêcheurs de l'Adriatique," "The Moissonneurs," and similar scenes of Italian peasant life. Two of these pictures are now hung in the Louvre, and it is marvellous to me how they could ever have been much admired by artists.

I am not surprised at their popularity with the general public, for they made a very nice pair of engravings, and there is a beauty about the women which is captivating at first sight ; but the figures are all posing, as if for a photographic group, and these once celebrated pictures *now* appear to me rather contemptible. L. Robert (like Gros) committed suicide, and it was perhaps on this account that the two men used often to be compared together, sometimes (I am ashamed to say) to the disadvantage of Gros.



Granet is the last artist I shall mention who actually studied in David's atelier. He never attempted the heroic style like Girodet, Guérin, and many others, nor did he endeavor, like Leopold Robert, to idealize Italian fishermen and peasants. He began with architectural interiors, and during a long life never changed his style. His figures, generally of medium or small size, are remarkably well drawn. Their action is perfectly natural, and they are always in their right places. Few artists ever lived whose work was more thorough and faultless than old Granet's. An excellent colorist, a sound draughtsman, and by no means deficient in poetic feeling, he had but one blemish, and that was the habit of using bad materials.

I remember his large picture of the Mass at Assisi soon after it was painted. The dim but glowing light of the church was admirably rendered, but now, alas! the picture has become so black that it is difficult to make out the figures. I believe he was in the habit of using dark-red grounds for his pictures, and this no doubt accounts for their so rapidly losing their brilliancy.

Granet was a native of Aix, near Marseilles, and in his old age returned to his native town, but used to contribute regularly to the annual exhibition in Paris; and his pictures were always admired, not only by the public, but by all the young artists, with whom he was a great favorite.

I trust I have shown you that David, whatever we may think of his pictures, was at any rate a successful schoolmaster, or what the French call a *chef d'école*, and his influence continued to be felt very perceptibly in the second generation.

Abel de Pujol, Leon Coignet, Delaroche, Couture, Flandrin, Alaux, etc., were all pupils either of Guérin, Ingres, or Gros, and they all preserved the David traditions of sound and careful drawing. Indeed, Flandrin carried the noble draughtsmanship of his master Ingres to such perfection that it seems to me impossible to advance any farther in this direction.

The two great pictorial heretics of this period were Delacroix and Decamps. The former learned his art under Guérin, and the latter under A. de Pujol, but in their case the maxim about "training up a child in the way he should go" certainly did not hold good, for both these great artists threw the time-honored atelier traditions overboard, and proceeded on diametrically opposed principles. Being both great colorists, and both unusually gifted with true artistic feeling, they succeeded at last in rivaling, if not eclipsing, the fame of their more orthodox contemporaries. With Delacroix, especially, the battle was a long one, and I well remember his "Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople" (perhaps the finest picture he ever painted) being rejected at the Salon, and in the following year being hung



at the top of the gallery. Decamps was much more careful about his drawing than Delacroix, and his pictures being always small, he did not give so much offence to "Ces Messieurs de l'Institut."

If I were addressing a French audience I should certainly not think of mentioning Ary Sch  ffer ; but as in England he enjoys a kind of reputation, a few words about him may not be out of place. In the early part of his career he followed in the track of Delacroix, and the pictures he painted at this time show a great feeling for color.

All at once (after achieving considerable success in this style) he went about on the other tack, gave up color, and took to imitating Ingres. He was always a poor draughtsman. His "Paolo and Francesco," and many of his best-known religious pictures, are wretchedly drawn, but there is a pretension to purity of style about them which takes people in. It is not many years ago since Sch  ffer, on the strength of these sentimental works of art, was considered in England to be the first of French painters.

If we proceed to my own time, which I may call the third generation from David, we find decidedly less of that precision of drawing for which the French school was famous. There are, of course, exceptions, and one or two very notable ones, but the number of weak draughtsmen amongst painters of mature years has certainly increased. It is,

however, when we come to consider the pictures of the younger generation that we find how very much the impulse given by David to correctness and refinement of drawing has exhausted itself. French literature (speaking of course generally) is either mawkishly sentimental or brutally realistic, and these unpleasant characteristics seem to be reflected in the painting of many of their popular artists.

Eccentricity appears now to be the surest road to fame. Formerly it required a great deal of talent to leave successfully the beaten track, but now the eccentric painter finds himself famous, not in spite of his grotesque peculiarities, but on account of them. I consider the modern French school to be in a very critical state. They have acquired color, but at too great a sacrifice. Beauty and dignity of form, noble composition, and all the higher qualities of art, become rarer every year, and will, if the present downward tendency continue, soon be extinct. Of course I am speaking of historical painting, either sacred or profane ; of the art, in short, of Girodet, Géricault, Gros, Ingres, and Flandrin ; and I think it will be generally allowed that no school can hold its place in the art-world which allows the noblest branch of the profession to wither and decay.

I will now proceed to consider the influence of David on other European schools. This influence was very marked in Italy, where an uneasy feeling that their once famous school had sunk very low



had prevailed for some time. Raphael Mengs was too feeble, and Pompeo Battoni too meretricious, a painter to regenerate Italian art, but when David appeared, an effort was made. The antique was again studied, the pernicious practice of imitating the old masters was abandoned, and Nature, the fountainhead of all art, was more conscientiously imitated.

David's example thus produced, amongst others, Benvenuto and Camuccini, both of whom were infinitely greater painters than had appeared in Italy for a century. Unfortunately, the revival so successfully begun was suffered to die out. The race of copyists became again in the ascendant, and no doubt reaped a rich harvest when, after the great Napoleonic wars, the Continent was overrun by wealthy dilettanti anxious to obtain (if not a genuine Caracci or Guido) at least a good imitation of one. The mania for collecting grimy old masters at last died out, and considering the shameless way in which the purchasers were imposed upon, it is a wonder that it lasted so long. When, however, this happy event took place, and a healthier taste became fashionable, Italian artists could not supply the demand. Small landscapes and pretty little costume pictures were painted in abundance, but for Biblical or historical art the public had to turn to the foreigner, to Overbeck or Cornelius.

Things are not quite so bad in Italy at the present day, but the school is very insignificant as compared with those of France, Belgium, England, and Germany.

In Germany the great art-revival began between 1810 and 1820. Cornelius and Overbeck, the two founders of the modern German school of historical painting, can neither of them be included among the followers of David, and yet it is not improbable that had the French school remained as it was under Boucher and Vanloo, Germany would also have been content to go on in the vicious routine of the eighteenth century. David, therefore, though not the progenitor, may have been the indirect cause of the modern German school. Winkleman's laborious researches, and the flood of light he threw on classical art and antiquities, had fully prepared the way for a revival ; and in Cornelius, Germany found a man after her own heart. In 1825, when he was still young, he was made Director of the Academy at Munich, and commenced the gigantic series of mural paintings with which his name will always be associated. He had a great number of scholars, and his manner is more or less perceptible in all their works. It is a manner I never *did* like, and probably never shall. The effort made by the artist is too evident, and all the personages seem to be acting a part. This is particularly noticeable in Kaulbach's and Piloty's large compositions. These



works were greatly admired in Germany, and are so still, but I believe their popularity is on the wane.

As for Overbeck, he never could have become the founder of a durable school. Ascetic, exclusive, and narrow in his art views, the only charm of his pictures is indissolubly connected with the personal character of the painter. His admiration for Perugino and the Umbrian school was genuine and unbounded. He abhorred Titian and loathed Correggio. With such ideas on art he may justly be called an anachronism, and it will be easily understood that however leniently and even favorably we may judge the work of an enthusiast like Overbeck, we should not be disposed to extend the same leniency to his imitators.

We will now examine what influence the great classical revival, inaugurated by David, had on British art. I think it must be allowed that this influence (if it ever existed at all) was very slight. Our artists were content to tread in the path pointed out to them by Sir J. Reynolds, and to study with more or less intelligence the old masters. Their knowledge of the human form was very imperfect, and there were at that time no large ateliers where they could acquire such knowledge. The Continent was closed to them, and they were therefore debarred from seeing the works of David, Girodet, Guérin, and Gérard. It is probable, too, that even had they been able to visit the Paris galleries occa-

sionally, they would have been greatly disgusted ; for it must be confessed that the later works of David are singularly repellent to an eye educated on Titian and Rubens.

In England, particularly during the reign of George III, there was no demand for large figure subjects. The government did nothing for historical art.

The churches were ugly square boxes with white-washed walls, sometimes be-plastered with black or white marble commemoration tablets, but in which paintings were tabooed. Private individuals could not, of course, find room in their houses for large pictures ; so, as a natural consequence, the English school was forced into another direction, and we find accordingly the best and ablest artists of this period amongst the portrait and landscape painters.

A little of old David's precision of drawing would not have hurt some of them, but landscape art depends more on color and effect than on fine perceptions of form, and careful study of the antique is obviously unnecessary to a man whose mission it is to paint mountains and trees, storm and sunshine.

Of the few artists who executed large figure pictures at this time I shall say very little, for the simple reason that there is very little to say. We all know Benjamin West's pictures, and are fully aware of their tameness and insipidity.

I think that West is a striking example of a man



who succeeded in impressing his character on his work. Highly respectable, prosaic, unimaginative, and rather goody, we find all these characteristics reproduced in his pictures, and yet many of these pictures, particularly "Death on the Pale Horse," created a perfect furore at the time, and the prices the artist got for his works would be considered high even at the present day.

Hilton was undoubtedly the best of the very few artists who endeavored to revive large historical painting in England. He was at any rate a good draughtsman and an accomplished painter, but his too palpable imitation of the old masters will always prevent his taking rank with such men as Girodet, Géricault, or Gros.

Fuseli, with all his bombast and affectation of anatomical knowledge, showed occasionally that he possessed real genius. I know nothing finer in the whole English school than his ghost scene of "Hamlet." The ghost is not one of those artificial bogies, so common in the works of Blake and Flaxman, but a right royal ghost, who stalks with gigantic strides across the stage. Fuseli was a very uneven painter. His pictures are generally ludicrous, but sometimes show real talent. He wanted ballast, and if West could have spared him a few tons of lead, both painters would have been greatly benefited.

My present lecture is on David and his school,

and therefore I might have omitted altogether the contemporary English painters. However, as I have mentioned some, I should be sorry to omit from my very short list the name of Stothard. Of all the English figure-painters of this period, Stothard had the greatest feeling for composition. With a little more power and correctness in his drawing, he would have been an English Prudhon. Even with all his feebleness of draughtsmanship he is to me always attractive. There is so much *bonhomie* about his work, such an absence of pretence and humbug, and so evident a desire always to do his best, that although we cannot close our eyes to his shortcomings, we may well condone them for the sake of the good honest feeling which pervades almost all his compositions.

I prefer to pass unnoticed one or two aspirants to high art, who in the first half of the present century were thought a good deal of. Some people still believe in them, but as I never did, I would rather say nothing about them, particularly as their work is foreign to the subject of my lecture.

It is pleasant to turn from a kind of art with which I have no sympathy, to more recent efforts, and to be able to speak more favorably of English historical painting before closing my lecture.

We have had in Etty a colorist both brilliant and original ; a painter who proved that it was quite possible to excel in color without imitating either the



Venetians or Rubens ; and in Dyce a draughtsman of the most severe and refined kind, a master of composition, and a most thorough artist.

I have often heard it remarked that Dyce's mural paintings are very Germanic in style, but to my thinking there is but the slightest likeness to any work of the Munich or Dusseldorf masters. His figures never have the labored self-conscious action which is so characteristic of the school of Cornelius. Of course, frescoes representing King Arthur and his knights must have a sort of family resemblance to illustrations of the Niebelungen legends, but the resemblance is merely superficial. A closer comparison will prove how much more true, and therefore more dramatic, is the action in Dyce's figures.

There is an old adage which tells us that "knowledge is power," but in art this hardly holds good. You may have plenty of knowledge and yet not have power ; though, on the other hand, you can hardly have true power without knowledge.

Dyce had both in an eminent degree, whereas Schadow, Kaulbach, Piloty, and most of the great German artists, though decidedly learned painters, had not the power of turning their learning to good account.

It is obvious that I cannot continue my remarks down to the present time, but I may be allowed to express an opinion that (in this Academy at least) feeble mysticism or blatant quackery is no longer associated with high art. We have, of course, our

faults, but history-painters do not, as formerly, lag hopelessly behind their colleagues in genre, portrait, and landscape art.

This happy result is entirely due to a return to old David's system of teaching ; namely, to a diligent study of the antique, supplemented by a long course of drawing from nature. Such an excellent competition as we recently had for the gold medal would have been simply impossible fifty years ago.

I don't want to flatter the rising generation, nor to tell them that they have twice as much talent as their fathers, and ten times as much as their grandfathers ; but what I wish to point out is, that by patient study and diligent work a much higher result can be obtained than by spasmodic effort or crazy enthusiasm.



LECTURE V.

ON THE MODERN SCHOOLS OF EUROPE.

My first lecture of the present course will be devoted to a kind of review of the various painting schools of modern Europe. As one of the jurors at the Paris International Exhibition, I had a rare opportunity of comparing one school with another, and I think that a lecture embracing the conclusions I came to, may be more interesting to you, and possibly more instructive, than a discourse on the works of the old masters.

National schools of art can at this present time hardly be said to exist, at least not in the sense in which they existed 300 years ago. In those times the attributes and characteristics of each school were sharply defined. The Roman, the Venetian, the Spanish, the German, and the Flemish, were as distinct in character as it was possible to be. Now, however, the national characteristics are very slight, and in many countries there seem to me to be none. The French and the German are the two great Continental schools from which the others spring. England, Austria, Spain, and perhaps Holland, have certain features of their own; that is, speaking

generally, one would know an English, Austrian, Spanish, or Dutch picture at once.

The Scandinavian and Danish schools are feeble offshoots of the German.

The Belgian is a vigorous branch of the French, and the Swiss is a less robust child of the same parent.

The Italian seems to me to be a mixture of French and Spanish, with a little of the old Italian element surviving. By the old Italian element I do not mean a reminiscence of Raffaello, Michael Angelo, or Titian, but rather of Carlo Dolce or Sassoferrato.

Russian and especially American art are of a nondescript character, and the reasons are sufficiently obvious.

A young American or Russian artist goes to Paris or Rome, and puts himself to school under a certain master. After a time he will paint pictures more or less like his master's ; he will exhibit them, and may get rewards and medals for them ; but he can hardly be called a representative of the American or Russian school. No American thinks of studying art in New York or Boston, and no Russian artist dreams of finishing his artistic education in St. Petersburg or Moscow. There can, therefore, be no American or Russian school properly so called.

I shall begin my lecture with a few words about our noble selves. I will give you rather the opinion



of the best French artists than my own. As this opinion was expressed with perfect sincerity, and came from competent and independent judges, I think we may derive a lesson from it.

It has, I know, often been remarked that French artists appreciate best whatever is most unlike their own work, and it was a feeling of this kind which consoled the Belgians for the favor with which the English galleries were regarded. I confess that there is a good deal of truth in the remark.

English painting is so unlike French that there can be no direct rivalry between the two schools, whereas in Belgian work the rivalry is unpleasantly close.

I may, perhaps, be allowed to add, that for the same reason those English painters who approximate most to the French school were precisely those who were the least appreciated. Novelty has a great charm, particularly to a Frenchman. If you ask a Parisian to dinner and wish to please him, do not give him delicate little French dishes, with light claret to drink. Give him half a codfish followed by a sirloin of beef, with plenty of bitter ale to wash it down with, and he will bless you and afterward cherish the memory of these *alimens vraiment Britanniques*.

Novelty of treatment was, however, certainly not the only reason of the success of the English school.

In the first place, it was noticed that there was a

certain refinement and elegance about the English galleries which was very pleasant to the jaded juror who had just been wading through long rows of coarse imitations of French art.

The English school was thought very highly of not on account of its color, still less on account of its drawing, but chiefly for the sake of the refined thought and invention shown in some of the pictures.

Then, again, in some cases, the novelty of the mode of execution, or the delicacy of the color, pleased our foreign judges; but I am quite sure that the popularity which English art has undoubtedly gained in Paris is due more to our brains than to our brushes.

The remarks and criticisms I heard in Paris all tend to confirm the opinion I have often expressed about the importance of originality in painting; of every artist, in short, thinking out his subject for himself, with nature as his only guide. Of course, novelty of treatment, unless combined with truth, is valueless. It would not be difficult to mention some novelties about which the remarks of my French friends would be the reverse of complimentary.

The first quality in the pictorial rendering of a subject must be truth, the second novelty or originality, and the third feeling or poetry. Where these three qualities are combined in a picture, it will more than hold its own in the eyes of competent judges against works far more brilliantly executed.



It must not, however, be supposed that foreign artists were delighted with *all* they saw in the British galleries. Our old faults—namely, indifferent drawing, and feeble, scratchy execution—were often noticed, but were not nearly so prominent as twenty-three years ago. I have no doubt we have improved in these respects, but I also think that our foreign judges are apt to be much more lenient than of old as regards drawing.

Their own drawing is not what it used to be in the days of Ingres and Flandrin. They have acquired other qualities, but they seem to me to have lost the art of expressing beautiful form. Of course, in my remarks to-night I shall speak of the *general* tendency of the schools. In every school there are exceptions to the rule, and amongst the French painters of the day there are at least one or two striking exceptions to the general decline of drawing power.

To return to the English galleries. It would be impossible to retail to you the unfavorable remarks that were made without becoming disagreeably personal. This adverse criticism of a few pictures gave perhaps more value to the verdict that, speaking generally, the English school was distinguished by its intellectual, refined, and, above all, thoroughly national character.

Let us hope that as years roll on we may gain more power in drawing and more manliness of execution, without losing any of those national qualities

which have carried us so creditably through the ordeal of an International Exhibition.

We will now leave the British section, and proceed to the French galleries. French art seems to me to be in a transition state. Public taste has been unsettled by the enormous success of Fortuny, Regnault, Corot, Daubigny, and other still more eccentric painters. Eccentricity is too often mistaken for genius, and coarseness for power. The last Salon (or annual exhibition) was the worst I ever saw. Of course, the French section of the International was rich both in quantity and quality, but I did not notice a single really fine picture that had been painted within the last three years. To what are we to attribute this unsatisfactory state of things? Although it has often been said that republicanism is fatal to art, it is difficult to believe that the present French Government can have any influence either for good or evil on artists' studios. Indeed, French sculpture, which is certainly improving, is there to negative any such theory.

The reason of the decline of the *older* men is obvious enough. They have ceased to paint for fame; they paint for money. Country-houses, carriages, horses, and last, but perhaps not least, madame's toilette, must be paid for, and the consequence is the production of what in a humbler sphere of art would be called pot-boilers. These inferior works are eagerly purchased at very high prices, and



the artist, finding he can coin as much money as he likes, takes less and less pains, till finally decadence sets in, and the men who from their age ought to be in the zenith of their artistic power, find themselves quite incapable of rivalling the productions of their youth.

The cause for the manifest dearth of rising talent amongst the younger men must be looked for elsewhere. That this dearth really exists there can be no doubt. The French themselves allow it. Medals which used to be given at the close of the Salon for painting are now given for sculpture. There must be some reason for this marked decline. My old friends shrug their shoulders and say: "Oh, the kind of teaching which we had in our youth is now voted rococo. Sensational art" (by which they mean art that will produce a sensation) "is now the fashion." The press has great power in France, and French critics, with few exceptions, like what is strange and eccentric. There are symptoms, however, that this quackery in art has had its day. The last two Salons have been too queer even for the new school of critics, and we may therefore hope that the sensational fit is over, and that the school may return again to the sound principles of design and drawing for which it has hitherto always been distinguished. I wish it understood that the deterioration I have been mentioning was not very noticeable on the walls of the International Exhibition. We had there the

cream of all that had been painted in France for the last ten years; and although the pictures bearing the greatest names were rather disappointing, there was evidence of abundance of talent in all departments of oil-painting.

The last years of the Empire and the first years of the Republic seem to have been particularly prolific in good work. The portraits of that period, the battle episodes, the nude figures, the still-life pictures, are all characterized by a solidity and thoroughness which we rarely find now. The most unsatisfactory feature in the work of this period is, to my mind, the landscape. I confess to a want of appreciation of either Corot or Daubigny; and as almost every landscape-painter is an imitator of either one or the other, as a matter of course I cannot like their pictures.

The landscape school of which I am speaking appears to me never to get beyond a sketch, and *le culte du laid* (the worship of ugly subjects) is carried too far.

The greatest modern landscape-painters France ever had were Marillat and Theodore Rousseau, and I think they are much better models to follow than Corot or Daubigny.

As I am criticising, I may observe that much as I admire French pictures of a few years back, I must say that I think the key in which these works are painted too low; and there is another more serious



fault which I have often noticed ; namely, the want of *naïveté*. The colors are simple enough, but the execution is obtrusive. In the portraits especially, one thinks more of the artist than of the sitter, whereas in certain portraits of the Belgian and German galleries at the International, the artist and his execution were completely forgotten, so life-like and natural were the heads.

In speaking of French painting it is as difficult to generalize as it would be of English. One man paints his whole picture in a low key, another paints white figures on a black background, one plasters his color on with a trowel, another models it rather thin. Still I think I may safely say that the majority of French pictures are painted with thick, opaque color and in a very low key.

Mannerism is perhaps the rock on which most rising reputations are shipwrecked, not only in France but everywhere else. A clever young artist paints a really fine picture, full of feeling, originality, and poetry, but rather low in tone. He has an immense success ; a success which he too often ascribes to the wrong cause. The consequence is that his next picture will probably be less poetical, but still darker in color. His friends and admirers, instead of pulling him up sharp, are more prodigal than ever in their praise. He gets a higher price for the second picture than he did for the first. It is, therefore, not surprising that our promising artist

paints lower and lower in color every year, until at last he becomes a confirmed mannerist.

The same danger exists in every department of the art. A young portrait-painter will perhaps have exhibited a full-length, distinguished by great character and breadth, but coarsely painted. The praise which he justly earns for this portrait prompts him to paint his next still more coarsely, and he too degenerates into a mannerist.

Mannerisms of various kinds are rampant in the present French school, and are in the present state of public opinion too strong for the more sober truthful work, which I am happy to say is not yet altogether extinct.

Unfortunately the encouragement given to these mannerists (or "impressionists" as they love to be called) is not wholly derived from their friends of the press ; it proceeds also from artists of real talent who ought to know better.

This seems to me the gravest symptom in the present condition of the French school. It is of little importance how enthusiastic the various literary or dilettanti cliques may be about their favorites. These are mere fashions, which sooner or later die a natural death, but when artists of standing give in to the prevailing delusions, the mischief becomes serious.

I can hardly believe that these artists of talent really admire the productions of which I am speak-



ing, but they are afraid of going against the stream of journalism, or else they wish to appear liberal in approving what is so diametrically opposed to their own practice. At any rate they acquiesce, and humbug flourishes. Before leaving the French painters, I ought, perhaps, to say something about the subjects principally affected by them.

No one can go through a French exhibition without being struck by the number of ghastly and horrible subjects which meet the eye on every side, and which seem to vie with each other in cruelty and brutality.

Death and suffering in every form have always been favorite subjects with French artists. Delacroix was continually painting murders and executions, but the comparatively mild form of horrors affected by him is not sensational enough for the modern school.

"Scene of the Inquisition—A man being Tortured to Death"; "Rizpah Driving away the Vultures from the Bodies of her Seven Sons, who are Swinging in the Wind"; "Roman Conspirators Drinking the Blood of a Slave whom they have just Murdered for this Festive Purpose"; "Nero Experimentalizing with Poison on his Slaves"; "Apollo Flaying Marsyas alive,"—are a few of the many pretty subjects which were conspicuous in the French galleries of the International Exhibition. One artist (and a very distinguished one too) has improved even upon

these subjects, and delights in painting not only death but decomposition.

At the Ecole des Beaux Arts the subject given last year to the students for their diploma pictures was "Augustus Causes the Tomb of Alexander the Great to be Opened, and Places a Crown of Gold on the Head of the Corpse."

When we reflect that Alexander had been dead some three hundred years, it will easily be understood that his body was in that half-putrid, half-mummified condition which is apparently so attractive to the artistic world in France.

Another marked characteristic of a French exhibition is the number of nude female figures. This is notoriously very objectionable to many English visitors, but for my part I would rather see a dozen nude nymphs than a decapitated figure or a putrid corpse. Many of these figures are done by young painters as a kind of supplement to their art education; and instead of being offended at their frequency, I am always glad to see so much laudable ambition. I only wish we had a few more similar efforts in our English exhibitions. The Hanging Committee would, of course, eliminate those which were objectionable either from want of technical skill or from any other cause, and the remainder might be allowed to hang on our walls and irritate Mrs. Grundy.

A third characteristic of a French exhibition is the



general excellence of what are called rustic pictures. The peasants are real peasants, and not models dressed up as such.

There is almost always in this class of subjects an honest attempt to give a truthful version of nature. There is a completeness about them that is very charming.

The pictures of flowers, fruit, fish, and every thing coming under the head of *nature morte*, seem to me equally good. In fact, one hardly ever sees a bad still-life picture in a French exhibition. I suppose the jury is more strict about fruit, oysters, and copper kettles than about humanity, and particularly female humanity.

Pictures of animal life are, I think, less common than in English exhibitions. Dogs especially are seldom painted. This may be partly owing to the currish aspect of French dogs. Our bloodhounds, mastiffs, newfoundlands, deerhounds, and all the aristocracy of the canine race, are hardly ever seen in France ; and it must be confessed that a stumpy-tailed mongrel or a clipped poodle is not a very tempting model. The French are not a doggy nation. A well-off Parisian will often keep a couple of ugly pointers, but it is always understood that "Stop" and "Komeer" are indispensable "pour la chasse," and not to be regarded as pets or companions.

Finally, in every modern French exhibition the

influence of Fortuny is very perceptible ; I believe, however, that almost all the disciples of this school are Spaniards or Italians residing in Paris, and that the French artists who devote themselves to microscopic painting have the 'good taste to follow the lines of Meissonier rather than those of Fortuny.

We will now examine the Belgian pictures.

Belgian art is derived entirely from France. At the International Exhibition one passed from the French to the Belgian galleries without being aware of the change of nationality. I think, however, that the branch is at present in a healthier state than the parent stem. When I compare the recent mural paintings which have been executed in Belgium with similar work done in Paris, I am struck with the vast superiority of the Belgian. Again, in landscape the Belgians are far in advance of their neighbors. Comparisons are proverbially odious, so I will not incur odium by comparing English landscape with Belgian, but I should recommend those who think that we specially excel in this branch of the art to go and look at what the Belgians are doing. The great men of the Belgian school—the men whose names are familiar to every artistic circle in Europe—are declining in power even more rapidly than their colleagues in France, but there seems to me to be more hope about the younger men. The Belgian portrait-painters are, I think, inferior to the French as a rule, but there were one or two portraits



in the Belgian galleries which attracted a great deal of attention from their unaffected simplicity, and in this respect contrasted very favorably with some more showy French work. The history pictures, again, were more careful and better drawn than analogous French work. There was less striving after effect and singularity, and much better composition. They reminded me more of what French painting used to be before the school became afflicted with what may be called "sentimental radicalism" in art.

I was glad to notice that Baron Leys, the painter of the strange mediæval pictures of the Antwerp town-hall, has not left a school of mediævalists behind him. The quaint ugliness of an old Flemish picture is interesting because it is real, but in these modern works the uncouth drawing and constrained stiff attitudes of the early Flemings are assumed, and therefore offensive. No doubt there are several excellent artists living who have studied under Leys, but they have all of them abandoned the affectation of their master.

The influence of Rubens and his school is not perceptible in modern Belgian work. This is rather curious when we consider the immense amount of Rubens-worship which is perpetually going on at Antwerp. Rembrandt, Franz Hals, and Vanderhelst have had much more influence on the Belgian school than Rubens, but the modern artists of Brussels are

not a race of copyists. They evidently study nature a good deal, and this, it appears to me, is the secret of their strength. On the whole I have formed a very favorable opinion of the Belgian school, and when I recall to mind the excellent mural paintings at Ypres and Courtray, I must say that the old Parisian sneer about the "contrefaçon Belge" is quite inapplicable at the present day.

It is manifestly unfair to compare the German gallery of the Great Exhibition with the French, English, or Belgian section. The pictures sent by Germany were hastily got together at the eleventh hour, and were notoriously inadequate specimens of German art. Still they were interesting, as showing the tendency of the school.

The first impression on entering the German gallery was a favorable one. It was like entering a gallery of old masters after a surfeit of garish, crude modern pictures. A closer examination led one, however, to form a less favorable opinion of the peculiarities of German art. The imitation of the old masters is, in my opinion, carried too far. Reminiscences of Holbein and Albert Durer crop up everywhere, and many pictures which are not directly imitative of the old masters have a brown old-varnished appearance. There may not have been any thing offensively bad or ludicrously absurd in the German gallery, but on the other hand, with a few exceptions, there appeared to me to be a sad



want of originality. These exceptional pictures were humble and unpretentious enough both in subject and dimensions, but full of truth and character.

The artist, Knaus, enjoys a great reputation both in Germany and Europe generally. His color, though true, is not very attractive. There is no great charm in his execution. The nature of his subjects precludes fine, classical drawing or noble composition. It may be asked, What, then, is his great merit? It is simply the intense realism of his figures. We always feel that we must have seen and known his peasants, his children, and his Jews. He has the same power of seizing types which John Leech so eminently possessed. Whether he quite deserves to be in the front rank of European painters is another question, but it is interesting to note the reputation such an artist has obtained in Germany, where art, though often learned, is seldom truthful or harmonious.

It has often been said that German art is never seen at its best in easel pictures, and that to express an opinion about it one ought to go to Germany, and study the mural paintings which abound there. It is more than twenty-five years since I visited either Munich or Berlin, and I am therefore not qualified to give an opinion about the *present* state of art in Germany. I confess I was not favorably impressed with what I *then* saw; and have often in the course of these lectures found fault with Kaulbach and his

school for neglecting Horace's well-known precept, " *Artis est celare artem.* "

The large mural works at Munich and Berlin used to be considered by Germans as the highest development of heroic painting. They asserted that their country was at the top of the ladder in high art, just as it undoubtedly was in music, and my criticisms on their great painters have always been provoked by this assertion. I have never stigmatized these decorative paintings as being absolutely bad or contemptible, but as being unworthy of the great esteem in which they were held.

I hear that at the present time other artists have in great measure superseded those of the school of Kaulbach, and that the highly artificial style of thirty years ago has been almost abandoned.

Scandinavian and Danish art are derived from Germany, as Belgian and Swiss are derived from France. In the case of Norway and Sweden, however, all the best artists emigrate to more southern regions ; and small blame to them, for when daylight begins at ten and ends at two, there is not much time for painting pictures. These artists, who are mostly landscape-painters, return to their native countries in summer and make their sketches and studies ; but the pictures themselves are painted either in Germany, Belgium, or France.

In Denmark the winter days are rather longer, and we find at Copenhagen a feeble attempt at a



native school, bearing about the same relation to Dusseldorf or Berlin, that Birmingham or Liverpool would to London.

Leaving these humble followers of the German school, we will now enter the Austrian and Hungarian galleries.

Some French critic compared Austrian art to a noisy brass band, and the comparison is not inapt. No doubt the band is a very good one ; the trumpets are loud, the trombones sonorous, and the big drum unexceptionable. Still it is not the kind of harmony which would please a musician. Austrian and Hungarian art, though apparently fascinating to the multitude, is too rich and cloying for a more fastidious taste. If you can fancy a mixture of plum-pudding and lobster-sauce, you will form a good idea of the most celebrated Austrian pictures. As the French school has a weakness for the horrible, and the English for the homely, so the Austrian delights in the showy. Pageants, royal receptions, and ceremonies of mediæval times are the subjects which the leading Austrian artists revel in ; subjects in which there is not much story to tell, no human emotions to portray, nothing but silks, velvets, armor, and trappings to paint. All these accessories are marvellously well executed, a great deal too well indeed for the heads and the flesh ; but it is this overpowering execution, united with a pseudo-Venetian coloring, which captivates the French bourgeois, just as it would captivate the London cockney.

I wish to observe that I am speaking of the large Austrian and Hungarian pictures which attracted so much attention at the Paris exhibition. Amongst the portraits and the smaller pictures there were some which would have done credit to any school. Vigorous in drawing and execution, full of character, and harmonious though rather dark in color, they appeared to me far superior to the kindred pictures from North Germany. I should have formed a very high estimate of the Austrian school if two or three of the principle pictures had been absent.

It may be asked why, if these large pictures were so offensively meretricious, the jury awarded them medals of honor?

I should be very sorry to have to defend all the decisions of the international jury, but in the present case I think I may say with truth that it was not admiration for this kind of art which dictated the award.

Before leaving the Austrian and Hungarian galleries, I would observe, that whatever may be thought of the pretentious richness of these large pictures, there exists at any rate an Austrian school, and that this school seems full of power and vitality. Austrians, do not, as a rule, paint their pictures in Paris or Rome. Others may, like myself, deplore the overpowering gorgeousness of a good deal of their work, but amongst the canvasses of more modest proportion there was abundant evidence of sound training and original invention.



Dutch art is very national ; that is, the subjects are national. Muddy seas, flat meadows with groups of cattle, canal and street scenes—in short, the same kind of subjects which were formerly painted by Teniers, Vandevelde, De Hoogh, and Paul Potter, are still the favorites with the Dutch artists.

In the Dutch school, as seen at the Great Exhibition, there was a laudable absence of priggishness or sensationalism, but the pictures appeared to me to lack the neat precision of touch and the delicacy of color which distinguished the old Dutchmen.

Pathos will cover a multitude of sins, and in some of the best modern Dutch work this quality is not wanting ; but in subjects which do not admit of pathos, such as the old familiar scenes of Teniers and Ostade, something more is wanted than indifferent execution and dull, inoffensive color. I am inclined to think that Dutch art was not only fairly, but even favorably represented at the Paris Exhibition, for in several recent visits to Holland I was always struck by the want of development of modern art. There are no great mural painters as in Belgium ; the Church, being Protestant, does nothing for art. The rich Dutch citizens and merchants are equally unsympathetic ; in short, there is no demand for a high class of art, so there is no supply.

I never heard of a Dutch collector who patronized modern painters. His rooms are always filled with Ostades, Wouvermans, Vanderveldes, etc., or more

frequently with wretched copies of these masters ; but in these private collections, which are scattered all over Holland, one never meets with a good picture by a modern artist. Under these circumstances I think it very creditable to Dutch artists that painting should not have declined more than it has in Holland.

Swiss art can only be regarded as provincial French. It is, however (like the Dutch), very national in its subjects. Glaciers, snow mountains, pine forests, and châteaux were the usual subjects in the Swiss section. Even the figure-subjects were redolent of Switzerland—peasants, guides, hunters, and tourists were the principal *dramatis personæ*. If a fault is to be found with these innocent works of art, it is that they look as if they were meant for the tourist or the Alpine Club market. A traveller who is detained by rain for a week at Interlaken would be just the man to purchase a good view of the Jungfrau, or perhaps he might be tempted by a group of Bernese Oberlanders at home. The native Swiss pictures are too much like their wood carvings, not works of good art but pleasant souvenirs.

We will now cross the Alps and say a few words about Italian art.

Italy was wretchedly represented at the Great Exhibition. None of her greatest artists had contributed. The best pictures were by two or three Parisian Italians, and the worst by men whose proper



abode ought to be Hanwell or Colney Hatch. It has often been remarked that modern Italians labor under the same disadvantage which afflicts a man who has had illustrious progenitors. He may not be a greater fool than other men, indeed he may be rather above the average, but he gets no credit for it. People are always contrasting him with his illustrious father or his glorious grandfather, and the poor fellow has hard work to get any justice done him. This may be true enough at Venice, Florence, or Rome, where the *chefs-d'œuvre* of the old masters are in very close proximity. I can well understand that a stranger who has been feasting his eyes all the morning on Titians and Paul Veroneses, should find the descent very precipitous to the level of a modern Italian studio; but in Paris there were no such formidable rivals to fear, and it is much to be regretted that Italy did not put forth her whole strength. I am inclined, however, to give another reason why modern Italian art has suffered from the proximity of so many *chefs-d'œuvre* by the old masters, and that is the temptation to become copyists. Wealthy Americans, if they cannot carry away the originals, will have copies, and the harvest to be derived from this source by a clever painter is so rich a one that he is often tempted to abandon the paths of originality and virtue, and become a copyist.

Of course the leading painters would not accept a commission for a copy of Beatrice Cenci, but there

have been (and doubtless are still) artists fitted for better things, who *do* accept these commissions and are glad of them. A friend of mine a good many years ago asked me to call and see a copy of this celebrated portrait which had just arrived from Italy. He had given the painter a commission for it two years before. I could not say much in praise of it. It was a fair average copy, but I could not help remarking that the artist had been a precious long time about it. "Oh," says my friend, "mine was the seventh order for a Beatrice Cenci in his book, and he told me that nothing would induce him to paint more than four copies a year of this head. He had other work to attend to," etc., etc. If a man once gets into the way of earning his living by copying, he will never get out of it (at least not in Italy).

Independently of downright copying there is the danger of imitating, and this is a danger to which Italian art has always been very much exposed. No good can ever come of imitating the old masters, but when the masters so imitated are men like Carlo Maratti or Luca Giordano, the downfall of the school is indeed precipitate.

Italian painters, like Italian sculptors are very skilful workmen, but they do not appear ever to get beyond a certain point of excellence.

The new school of Rome may be said to have been founded by Fortuny, and in this school execu-



tion is every thing. Doubtless this phase of Italian art is better than the dreary decadence of the first half of the century, but I cannot say I am a great admirer of the new style. I will speak of Fortuny and his followers presently, when I get to the Spanish school, but before leaving the Italian Court I may mention that there were some specimens of microscopic painting which were marvellous if they were really legitimate pictures and not painted photographs. Admitting, however, that they were genuine pictures, the very fact of their looking like colored photographs relegates them to an inferior style of art. They are curiosities, and not much more.

In justice to the Italian section I should mention that if the oil pictures were bad, the water-colors by Rota were excellent.

There seems to me no reason whatever why Italy, the land of art (*par excellence*), should lag behind in the international race. Italians are quick, intelligent, and imaginative. If they would steer a middle course between the tame imitations of the old masters and the sensational quackeries of contemporary art, I have no doubt they would take a high place in the European school.

The Spanish gallery was one of the most interesting in the whole exhibition. One or two of the large pictures showed great power and originality. I believe these pictures were painted by Spaniards

residing in Rome. Indeed all the best Spanish pictures are painted either in Paris or Italy. There is no native school, as in the days of Velasquez and Murillo.

The most attractive wall in this gallery was that devoted to the works of Fortuny. Fortuny's mode of painting, his delicate sense of color, and the novelty of his subjects, took the artistic world by storm some fifteen years ago. Since that time a host of imitators have arisen, mostly Spaniards or Italians, so that the modern Spanish school has come to be identified with his very peculiar kind of art.

I have no doubt that if one were to go to Spain and visit the studios of the resident artists, one would find very little of the Fortuny element. Probably the pictures would be more like Portuguese work, which of all European schools is the most backward. Setting aside, however, the question as to how far the Fortuny style can be called national, I will hazard a few remarks about its merits and faults.

In the first place, I think we ought to welcome any novelty in art, provided the novelty is not downright absurd, and a man who like Fortuny revolutionized modern art (at any rate in the south of Europe), certainly deserves consideration.

His pictures are characterized by a wonderful delicacy of execution and brilliancy of color. His drawing is firm and masterly. With all these good



qualities I cannot consider him to have been a great artist. In the first place, the subjects he affected were of the most frivolous and meretricious description. Secondly, the general effect in his pictures is not sufficiently attended to. I have heard them compared to those sheets one sometimes sees composed of a jumble of small photographs. Each individual figure or gaudy bit of stuff is perfect by itself, but the whole picture is deficient in effect.

Finally, the execution wants that breadth and manliness which are so conspicuous in the best works of Meissonier. Much as I admire any man of genius who departs from the beaten track and creates a style of his own, I cannot help thinking that Fortuny has been much over-rated.

Many of his followers' works resemble the crude wall-papers and chintzes which used to be common before South Kensington was in existence.

Pinks, light blues, and coal-tar dyes of the most violent hues (colors which would drive our æsthetic amateurs mad) here run riot. The execution is always clever, but the offence against good taste in color is not to be got over. I do not recollect any landscape work in the Spanish gallery except as backgrounds to the figure pictures. If I were a Spanish artist I should leave the fripperies of the boudoir, and turn my attention to the grand forms of rock and forest which abound in the Asturias, or to the sierras of Andalusia, with their semitropical vegetation.

Of Russia and the United States as picture-producing countries but little can be said. There are a few Russians scattered over Germany, France, and Italy, who paint and exhibit pictures which pass muster more or less creditably.

Some give a Russian flavor to their work by painting Muscovite peasants, sledges, wolves and bears, but even these national pictures might have been done by French or German artists as far as the execution goes. The eye was not impressed in the Russian gallery, as it was in the English, Austrian, or Spanish departments, by some national peculiarity.

The large picture which obtained one of the medals of honor was painted in Rome. It represented one of the most barbarous episodes of Nero's persecution of the Christians.

I thought it clever as a decorative work, but very weak in drawing.

There were in the Russian gallery some good heads very boldly and forcibly painted. Their authors, though their names ended in "sky," "vich," or "koff," were pupils of the French or German schools, and therefore these works, though painted by Russians, can hardly be considered as characteristic of the school. The Byzantine element was not in the least traceable in the Russian galleries. Probably Byzantine pictures were excluded, as coming under the head of manufactures.



Greece exhibited a few pictures of modest proportions, and still more modest merit; but even this faint commendation cannot be accorded to Portugal, whose small contribution was ludicrous for its badness.

The art of the United States is even less national than the Russian. American artists seldom give us reminiscences of their country, and the American gallery was exactly like some of the rooms in the French Salon.

From their admiration of Parisian art it is probable that the American school of the future will, like the Belgian, be a branch of the French, unless indeed some American Fortuny should be raised in the States who would give an original impulse to Transatlantic art.

French critics were rather hard on the American figure-painters for choosing such subjects as the death of Cleopatra.

What in the world, they said, had Cleopatra and the Nile to do with America? About as much, I should say, as Nero and his atrocities had to do with France. According to these gentlemen, French artists may choose their subjects from any period and from any country; the same license may be allowed to Belgium, Germany, and possibly to England; but the American is to confine himself to the short and not very picturesque history of his own country.

This seems to me very unfair, but at the same time I should have liked to have seen amongst the landscapes something more national than views of Bougival or Fontainebleau.

I have now taken you all round the picture galleries of the International Exhibition, and I may with truth say that we have no cause to be ashamed of the position we hold in the European art-world. The French were at home and able to exhibit nearly all their best works of the last ten years. We, from reasons that are very well known, were unable to do so, and yet we held a very respectable position. I am not John Bull enough to say, as some of my friends at the hotel did, that our school is the first in Europe. But what I *do* say is that English art (speaking of course generally) is in a thoroughly healthy state; that English artists (also speaking generally) think more of their subjects and less of themselves than Frenchmen, Belgians, or Austrians do; that whilst some of the leading foreign schools are past the zenith of their power, we, on the contrary, seem to be improving steadily, and gradually getting rid of our faults. Some may be inclined to attribute this marked improvement to the extraordinary sums of money which have of late years been spent on art in this country, some to the existence amongst us of a school of high-art criticism, some to foreign influence. I attribute it to none of these causes, but solely to better training and a more scrupulous regard for nature.



It may be thought that in boasting about our better training I am blowing the academic trumpet pretty loudly, but I am not speaking so much of the training you get here and at other London art schools, as of the training which every young painter has to give himself after he has learned the A B C of his art. It is this training especially which is better than it used to be. The commonplace slap-dash way of going to work of former days is now the exception and not the rule with young painters.

One man may be careless or weak in his drawing, but he may have a keen sense for truthful atmospheric effect, and he labors away at his picture until he approximates to the out-of-door look of nature; another (a portrait-painter perhaps) wearies out his sitters in his endeavors to be truthful; a third will patiently brave the elements on a bare Scotch moor, humbly trying to imitate the fitful patches of sunshine and mist on the hillside before him.

All this is what I call good training. It is honest, conscientious work, and it is this which tells favorably on a school, rather than Manchester patronage or Oxford æsthetics.

I would observe, in conclusion, that in the appointment of our new President we have another cause for self-congratulation. It would be out of place here for me to dwell on all his qualifications for the important post he fills, but I should not like my first lecture under his presidency to pass without

expressing my thorough satisfaction with the choice we have made. To say more would probably be unpleasant to him, to have said less would have been unpleasant to me.

I may, however, point out that the progress of the English school of art does by no means rest with the President of the Royal Academy (however excellent he may be) ; it depends on the individual exertion of every member of the profession, from the President down to the probationer who seeks admission to the schools. Let us all do our best to produce careful, honest, and original work, and I have no doubt of the result.



LECTURE VI

ON DRAWING.

DRAWING is the backbone of all great work, and it is an art which, if neglected when you are young, does not appear ever to be acquired in after-life.

Most artists improve in color, and particularly in execution, as they get older, but in drawing they seldom acquire greater correctness. They acquire facility, but not accuracy. It is, therefore, of the highest importance that all students should carry out their studies in drawing as far as they possibly can whilst they are young. I am not speaking of their chalk studies alone, but also of their painted studies.

It often happens that as soon as a student gets a palette on his thumb, he considers himself completely emancipated from all the trammels of correct drawing, and after sketching his figure with a few hasty strokes of charcoal or red chalk, he smears on his color at once. I have known some who would not condescend to make any preliminary outline at all, but went in for drawing with the brush.

I can quite understand that when you first begin painting, the novelty of the material and the difficulties of color should prevent your drawing with the

same precision and firmness as you would with charcoal and chalk ; but when these difficulties are overcome, you should endeavor to return to your former precision. It is very difficult, when once a slovenly habit of drawing has been contracted, to return to accuracy ; but nevertheless it is possible.

The fact is, that an artist, to excel as a draughtsman, should consider himself a student all his life.

The school of painting ought to be the school of drawing in color, and no student ought to be allowed to color a badly drawn figure or head. This was always the rule, not only in Delaroche's School, but in all the *ateliers* of his contemporaries ; and as more than half the present members of the Institute were students in these schools, the system cannot have been a bad one.

It may surprise some of you to hear the time that was spent in drawing the figure before beginning to paint.

The model used to sit for six consecutive days : from seven to twelve in summer, and from eight to one in winter, and an hour was allowed every day for intervals of rest.

During the whole first day's sitting, nothing but drawing was done. Sometimes the shades of the figure were rubbed in with bitumen or some transparent brown, but no color was ever used. The master would come early on the Tuesday, and until he had passed, as it were, every student's drawing,



no one who studied seriously would think of laying on color. Six hours, therefore, out of the twenty-four were spent before the actual painting began ; but, at any rate, good solid foundations had been laid : well-proportioned and carefully drawn figures were the rule and not the exception, and if the student had not time to finish his work by the end of the week, he would have at any rate a large portion of the figure carefully studied.

When a figure is well drawn, the master will take a pleasure in giving the student some hints about the color, and will perhaps take the palette himself ; but to give instruction in color when there is no drawing, is like furnishing a house before the walls are built.

I have noticed that some of you in the life school attach too much importance to the mere outline, and neglect the structure and internal markings of your figures. Now the bones and principal markings of a figure are of infinitely more consequence than the outline ; it is *they* which give the action and proportion, and in every stage of figure-drawing they should be accurately and clearly defined, to serve as landmarks from which the outline may be mapped out. If you were drawing a head, you would not trace a sharp outline of the hair, ears, and cheeks, without having first indicated the position of the eyes, nose, and mouth. Why then should you proceed on a different principle in drawing a figure ?

There is another bad habit of drawing which has of late become too common in the schools, and which I, as visitor, have often protested against ; and that is the practice of blackening the figure all over, with the intention of working out the details with bread-crumbs or the eraser. It may be that this is the most expeditious way of producing a smoothly-finished drawing, but I am sure it is not the most artistic way.

An Academy figure should be drawn on the same principle that a ship is built. If you visit a ship-builder's yard you will see vessels in all stages of progress, but the future character and destination of each are discernible almost from the first laying down of the keel. You can tell at a glance whether the future vessel is to be a clipper yacht, a collier brig, or a barge. If you revisit the yard a month or two afterward, you will find great progress. The builder has got the planking on, but the vessels have retained their original form. In another month, perhaps, they will be found decked, caulked, coppered, and ready for launching ; but they have never lost the original lines given them.

So it should be with your Academy figures. They will, of course, be less complete on the third and fourth days than on the ninth or tenth ; but in no stage of their progress should they present the formless, hopeless appearance they too often do.

Let me hasten to add that this inartistic way of



drawing (though too common here) is not universal, and that those who have chosen the better path will find the benefit of it hereafter.

I will now proceed to give you a few words of advice about figure-drawing after you have left the schools and are painting pictures of your own.

It will seldom happen that when you have to introduce a nude or semi-nude figure into your picture, you can copy the model exactly as you would in the Academy schools. *There* all you have to do is to copy what you see, but if you have to represent a Moses, a Prometheus, or an Andromeda, and your model has short legs and deformed feet, it will not do to be too literal in your copy of him.

Artists often say on these occasions that the model puts them out, and that they can get on better without nature. Of course, if they copy all the defects of their model they may, to a certain extent, be right in saying that they do better without nature; but even in this case I doubt it. Nature, though cramped and vulgarized, is better than feeble reminiscences of Michael Angelo or Carracci. An accomplished draughtsman will constantly refer to nature without servilely copying her. It is not possible that the great sculptors of antiquity found (even in Greece) such matchless specimens of humanity as the Theseus, the fighting gladiator, or the Milo Venus. It is still more incredible that they evolved these perfect forms out of

their inner consciousness. No; they idealized and improved what they found, not so much by taking the head of one model and putting it on the shoulders of another, adding the arms of a third, as by the much more subtle process of keen and artistic observation of various types of beauty.

To descend from the time of Phidias to our own days, you must (if you wish to excel) pursue the same method. Do not copy all the defects of your model, but, on the other hand, do not fancy you can draw without a constant reference to nature. It is far from my intention to deprecate the study of anatomy, and particularly that kind of artistic anatomy which our Professor so ably teaches, but I am sure he would agree with me in saying that anatomy *alone* would only enable you to build up a coldly correct form of the human figure without either beauty or individuality.

Anatomy, and, I may add, academic studies generally, must be looked upon as the grammar of figure-painting, and we all know that however necessary it may be for a writer to be grammatical, grammar alone will not give him an elegant or even a clear style.

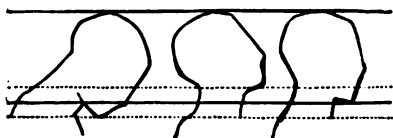
So it is in drawing and painting. The knowledge of anatomy and drawing which you acquire here is not the end of art, but only the beginning.

It would be out of place in this lecture to give you rules of proportion for the human figure. These



rules you can learn (if you care about learning them) elsewhere, but it may be well for me to give you a few hints as to when and where it is right to depart from them. First, as to the size of the head. You probably all know that the head measures from one seventh to one eighth of the height of the figure. Seven and a half heads to the figure is a good average proportion. If, however, you have to draw figures of heroic size, you will have to make the head barely one eighth, and the larger the size of your figures the smaller ought to be the relative size of the head. Michael Angelo exceeded even these limits, and some of his imitators, who have always copied his defects rather than his good qualities, have caricatured him by giving their figures a height of ten or eleven heads. There is a point beyond which the sublime becomes the ridiculous.

Whilst on this subject, I would observe that these proportions can only be depended on when the head is neither inclined up nor down. An up-turned head measured from the chin to the top of the head is always much shorter than one whose facial angle is vertical, and a head inclined downward and measured in the same way is considerably longer.

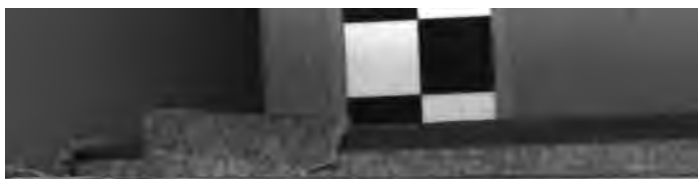


In colossal figures, the hands and feet should be in proportion to the head, and therefore rather small for the body and limbs.

It is generally advisable to make the leg, from the patella downward, somewhat longer than it is in nature. Length of leg gives style and elegance to a figure.

In many of the antique statues (the Apollo and the Venus de Medici, for instance) this method of improving nature seems carried to excess, and I should recommend a middle path between the extreme length of the antique tibiae and the short Dachshund-like legs of our models.

It must be remembered, that if you preserve the centre of the figure where it ought to be, you can only lengthen the tibia at the expense of the femur ; and although a great length from the knee to the instep may be desirable, yet a very short thigh is certainly not an element of beauty. In short, and even in medium-sized models, the middle of the figure is generally too low, so that you may increase the length of the leg without at all diminishing the proportions of the thigh. It is a curious fact, that sitting and especially kneeling figures by the side of standing ones always appear small if represented of their exact relative size. I have always found this to be the case, and have invariably had to increase the dimensions of my kneeling figures, although by so doing I knew I was violating strict truth. As another instance of a case where a departure from perfect accuracy is necessary, I may mention the drawing of foreshortened arms and legs, particularly



when they are only slightly foreshortened. Unless the outline and muscular development are kept rather fuller than it is in nature, the limbs will look withered and poor.

Style in drawing is not synonymous with correctness. There can be no true style without a certain amount of correctness, but, on the other hand, a drawing may be very correct and yet deficient in style. Photographs are a good illustration of the distinction.

No one will dispute the general accuracy of photography, and yet how few photographs possess the element of style!

A fine style of drawing may be defined as the delineation of beautiful forms in a masterly and simple manner. It must be founded on nature, but purified and refined by the continual study of the antique.

The execution should not be timid and labored, and on the other hand it should not obtrude itself by its dexterity. Michael Angelo and Raffaele are generally accepted as the great masters of style in drawing, and it is very noticeable how simple and unobtrusive their execution is.

Michael Angelo's departure from natural proportions, and his often forced attitudes, give great offence to many modern artists, particularly to the mediævalists; and instead of recognizing in him (as Sir Joshua did) the great master (*par excellence*) of

style in drawing, they strongly object to his peculiarities. For myself, I cannot say that I worship him to the extent that Sir Joshua did ; but when I recollect the timid and meagre drawing of the Florentine and Umbrian schools of the period, and compare these poor forms with Michael Angelo's " Creation of Adam and Eve " in the panels of the Sistine Chapel, I must acknowledge that his great reputation as a draughtsman and designer is fully deserved.

Sir J. Reynolds, in his discourses, with which most of you are familiar, has entered very fully into the question of style, or of what used in his day to be called the great style or the grand style.

I am not going to inflict on you many quotations from the celebrated discourses, but there is one sentence which I shall quote, as it will serve as a text on which to graft my own remarks on the subject of style. The passage is this :

"The whole beauty and grandeur of the art consists in being able to get above all singular forms, local customs, particularities, and details of every kind."

It appears to me that Sir Joshua ought to have added at the end of his condemnation of " singular forms, particularities, and details of every kind," the words, " when they are mean or trivial." Forms may be full of character, and even beautiful, though singular. Many of the antique fawns' heads, though singular enough, have the elements of style in them.



Raffaele's cripple at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple is singular to the verge of grotesqueness, but he in no way detracts from the grand style of the cartoon. Many other examples of singular forms might be given from the works of acknowledged masters of style.

Then, again, if by "details" ugly details are meant, I quite agree with Sir Joshua in thinking them incompatible with a grand style, but it is detail which gives individuality to a figure; and in the fighting gladiator, the dancing fawn, and indeed in all the masterpieces of antiquity, the detail is most elaborate.

Neglect of detail is the besetting sin of those painters who aim at the grand style. They fail to see that the same process of selection may be applied to the detail, as well as to the general proportions of the figure.

In a portrait you must of course copy your sitter. You must take him as you do a wife, for better, for worse. He may have a cast in his eye or a conspicuous pimple on his nose, which, of course, as a faithful portraitist you are bound to reproduce. You are under no such obligation if you are painting an ideal head from the same individual. You may omit the pimple, and make him look straight. But your same sitter may have finely-formed furrows across his brow, or delicate expressive wrinkles extending from the corners of his eyes. Are you, in

painting an ideal head, to neglect these landmarks of age and wisdom? I say, by no means, neither in painting nor sculpture.

The word "ideal," from a misconception of its meaning, has come to be almost a term of reproach, and at a recent lecture at the Royal Institution some ridiculous parody of Canova was nick-named "Ideal," and contrasted unfavorably with a masterly portrait bust by Donatello.

This is about as fair as if I, holding a brief on the other side, were to produce the Theseus as a specimen of the ideal, and Madame Tussaud's effigy of the Claimant, of the realistic.

The "ideal," or what Sir Joshua calls the grand style, means a generalization of beautiful forms, but it has nothing to do with neglect of detail, except when such detail is trivial, ugly, or superfluous.

It must also be remembered that detail does not mean furrows, wrinkles, and veins alone ; it means also minute correctness in rendering of form.

The outward contour of any portion of the human form is never perfectly spherical, nor perfectly elliptic, nor perfectly straight, and it is the delicate perception and artistic execution of form which constitutes beauty.

Take the original of "The Laocoon," and a common fourth-rate garden cast of the statue which has stood half-a-dozen English winters, and has had the benefit of several good coats of paint. In this cast



all the beautiful passages of the original have disappeared, and the neglecters of detail get what they think so desirable, namely, a general want of precision and individuality. Michael Angelo himself, who is Sir Joshua's high-priest of the grand style, gives plenty of detail whenever his work is not meant to be seen at a distance. In his "Moses" and other statues even the veins are carefully studied.

It is the custom, in this as in most other academies, for the student to begin with the Antique, and finish with the Life. The object of this is of course to avoid multiplying difficulties at first, and to accustom him to draw from an inanimate object before he proceeds to copy one that is always more or less moving.

I should, however, very much wish that those who are ambitious of following the highest walk of art would supplement their life studies by a return to the antique.

They would then perceive beauties which they little dreamt of during their apprenticeship. They would acquire a fine taste for form, and would learn to generalize the knowledge they had acquired in the life schools.

I would make this class of students the highest in the Academy, so that no one should feel that by returning to the antique he was being subjected to degradation. In this last stage of the student's edu-

cation, artistic studies from the antique should be made, and not what are called finished drawings, such as are at present executed to compete for prizes. The character and beauty of the antique should be given rapidly, and by simple means.

Before proceeding to speak of the difficult problem of drawing objects in motion, I should wish to impress on your minds the importance of being able to draw tolerably from memory.

All drawing is, strictly speaking, an effort of memory. You cannot look at your model and trace lines on your paper at one and the same time ; there must be an interval of a second or two, and all that you have to do to acquire facility in drawing from memory, is gradually to prolong this interval.

If you visit a large forge, you are sure to see men in violent action, either working the rolling-mill, or forging large masses of iron under the Nasmyth hammer. You may be certain that their action is perfectly natural, and that it is not only natural but most appropriate to the work they are about. Men who have been rolling boiler-plate for years are sure to set about their work in the most practical way. Sketching on these occasions is impossible, except, perhaps, to a newspaper correspondent, but there is nothing to prevent your watching the action of these men intently.

You will notice the various positions the body arms, and legs assume to accomplish various tasks ;



how each action is fitted to the work. You will endeavor to draw from memory what you have noticed. Your drawings will doubtless be very imperfect, but they will be infinitely better than what you could have produced before taking stock of what you saw at the forge.

In London you may not have opportunities of seeing much in the way of action that is worth drawing, but even in London people skate, play lawn tennis, and other games which give rise to action, and in the country there is always plenty to observe if you keep your weather eye open.

Every one cannot become a Horace Vernet, but I think that any fairly good draughtsman may, after examining an object carefully, learn to reproduce it two or three hours later when he reaches home; and this kind of power (though never cultivated in academic schools) is one which every young artist ought to endeavor to acquire. Very young children (unless they are asleep) cannot be studied in the deliberate manner in which a professional grown-up model is studied. Wild animals, again, are difficult things to draw, because they cannot be depended upon to retain the same position for any length of time.

It is in these cases that an artist who has exercised his memory has an enormous advantage over one who is merely a good academic draughtsman.

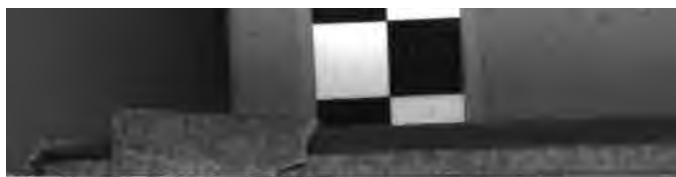
I will now turn to the question of how to repre-

sent objects which are meant to appear in motion, as a man walking, running, or striking, a horse galloping, etc. I do not intend to investigate the laws of motion, nor to point out the muscles which are brought into action by violent movement, but simply to analyze the appearance to our sense of vision of these various actions.

In drawing inanimate objects which are at rest, that which is apparent to the eye really exists, and therefore by drawing what you see, you will be mathematically correct; but even this apparent truism does not hold good in every case.

For example, take the usual pictorial method of representing a star, which, although astronomically incorrect, gives the impression a bright star produces on our organs of sight, and is therefore the proper method. Seen through a telescope the planets become round disks, and the brightest fixed stars mere points, and there can be no doubt of the non-existence of any radiation; and yet the *appearance* of it is so constant that the terms "star-shaped," "star-fish," etc., are always used to designate objects of this form; and it is quite consistent with the soundest principles of art to represent what *appears* to be, rather than what *is*.

When we come to consider moving objects, we find plenty of contradiction between what appears to be and what is. There are many moving objects which present no difficulty. Driving clouds or a



ship in full sail are easily drawn, because, although moving rapidly through the air, their form varies very little as they proceed, and their apparent form is in no way different from their true form. Even the ever-heaving waves of the open sea, though by no means easy to draw correctly, offer no discrepancy between what you see and what *is*.

The big Atlantic rollers, and particularly the short, steep, irregular waves one sometimes meets with in the Channel, are awkward things to draw, especially to a sea-sick artist ; but, at any rate, unless he is very far gone, he sees nothing which does not really exist, and no effect of wind on the waves is so rapid that he cannot see it.

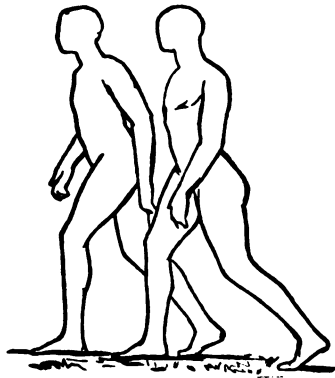
The case, however, is widely different if you have to represent a rotating wheel. The spokes of the wheel are there, but it is impossible to see them. All you will be able to make out is a kind of flickering radiation, with perhaps some faint traces of concentric circles caused by mud spots or other marks on the spokes.

Even when the wheel turns very slowly the spokes become blurred and confused, and when it revolves briskly they are lost sight of altogether.

This is an extreme case, in which nothing in the way of spokes is distinguishable, and therefore nothing can be done ; but when we see a man running or a horse galloping we *do* distinguish the legs both of man and horse. We get a decided impres-

sion both of form and action, and it is our business as artists to convey that impression on paper or canvas. It is *not* our business to draw man or horse in positions which may be true, but which are contrary to our own impressions. That there are plenty of such positions I hope to prove by means of these diagrams.

We have here two men walking, one of whom has his left leg forward and the other his right leg.



This diagram represents them going along fair heel-and-toe, perhaps not very elegantly, but at any rate it conveys the idea of walking. Now it is self-evident that, in walking, the legs must pass each other at every step. Let us endeavor to draw our pedestrian at the moment when one leg is passing in front of the other, and we shall find it impossible to give the idea of fair heel-and-toe walking.



Now, why is this? The reason appears to me to be twofold; in the first place, at each step there is a momentary pause when both feet



are on the ground; and the eye seizes on this pause, and naturally associates the position the legs are in with the action of walking. Secondly, it is only in this position that any idea can be given of the length of the step and the rate of the man's progress. A photograph taken at the moment when one leg is passing the other, would not convey the impression of forward movement.

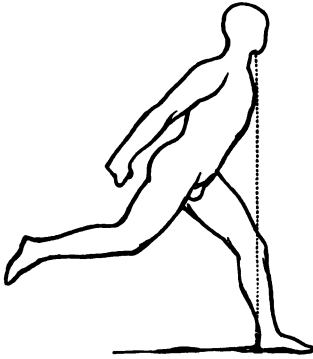
In nature it is the actual motion of the leg which causes the attitude to appear all right; but if we could arrest it instantaneously, the action would appear as cramped in nature as it does on paper.

During a thunder-storm at night, if you should ever happen to see a walking or a running man illumined by a flash of lightning, you will notice that he does not appear to be moving at all, unless the flash occurs just at the time when his legs are fully extended. I have myself seen the curious effect of a sudden flash of light on a moving carriage and horses. The horses, though trotting fully eight miles an hour, did not seem to be moving, and every spoke in the wheels was as plainly seen as if they had not been rotating.

What I have said about the action of walking applies equally to running. The attitude appears always more or less cramped unless the moment is seized when the runner's legs are fully extended.

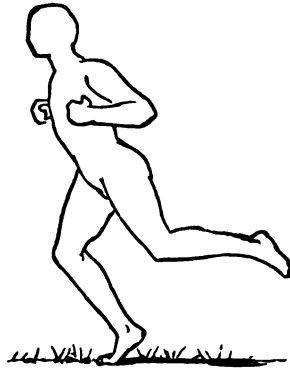
The illustration of running given in Flaxman's lectures is wrong in more than one particular.

In the first place, the heel ought not to touch the ground; it never does in running. Secondly, the figure appears poised on his right foot; indeed, he would fall rather backward than forward; and it is essentially necessary, in expressing the action of running, that the figure should appear to fall forward whenever one foot is



on the ground.

In drawing the human figure either running or walking, this must always be attended to, otherwise the figure looks like an academy model, with his hind foot comfortably propped up on a box. It is possible that for a fractional part of a second, a running man's leg might assume the vertical position given it by Flaxman; but this position, even if true, is one of those which ought never to be selected.



In the next fractional part of the second, the foot being arrested by the ground, and the body moving



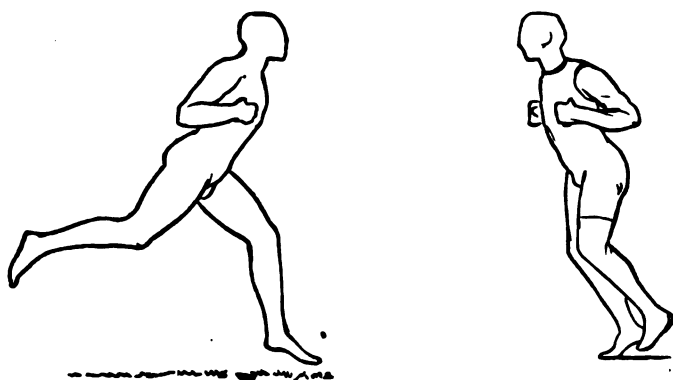
rapidly forward, the leg must assume a slanting position, and our man will be off his balance, and under the necessity of rapidly bringing to the front his other leg ; and thus the idea of running is given, as in the preceding diagram.

Flaxman's floating and aërial female figures are exquisitely graceful, and here he is seen at his best ; but I think that the action of his male figures is rather academic ; that is, they suggest too much the life-school, where the model is placed in a position which he can hold for a considerable length of time.

I am quite aware that in a severe bas-relief composition, or in a grave historical picture, a runner should not be represented as he might appear at Lilliebridge grounds, or racing after a cricket-ball at Lord's. He should proceed more by comparatively slow bounds than by quick steps, but the sentiment of forward impetus should be just the same. There is a fine example of a running figure in one of Raffaele's *stanze*. I think it is in the "Heliodorus Expelled from the Temple."

In the next diagram, the action approximates to Flaxman's, but there is this important difference, that the left foot is in the air, and we feel that before it gets a good grip of the ground, the body will have moved on considerably, and the balance of the figure will have a strong forward tendency, as in the last illustration.

Any attempt to represent a man running whilst one leg is crossing the other, will be just as hopeless



as to give the idea of walking under similar conditions.

In the action of striking, the proper moment for the draughtsman to seize is either just before or just after the blow has been given. Here, again, if the arm were arrested midway, the attitude of the striker would appear cramped and absurd. Moreover, there would be nothing in the position of the arm to indicate whether the blow was a heavy or a light one.

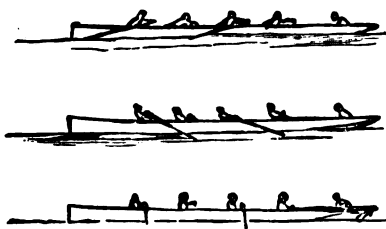
Exactly the same remarks apply to the action of throwing. By accurately giving the thrower's preparatory position, the power of the throw can be indicated ; and the same may to a certain extent be done by taking him after the stone or ball has left



his hand, but nothing satisfactory can come of attempting to draw him in an intermediate stage.

If we have to represent men rowing, the best way is to draw them leaning forward and with outstretched arms, the oars just catching the water.

The degree in which they are reaching forward is the key to the length of the stroke, and, therefore, in great measure, to the velocity of the boat. If they are rowing a race, or



spurting, their arms and backs would be almost horizontal ; if they are merely paddling, their bodies would be only gently inclined forward. We have no means in painting, drawing, or photography, of indicating the number of strokes per minute, any more than we have of timing the rapidity of a man's steps when he is walking or running ; but we can in both cases indicate clearly the *length* of the stroke or step, and the length is generally a pretty good index of the rapidity.

Supposing that, with the idea of being original, an artist should choose to represent the moment when the stroke is half rowed through, when the bodies of the crew are comparatively upright, and the arms beginning to bend, can any one suppose

that his drawing would have the same spirit as if he had taken the previous moment, when the men were all extended?

From these examples we may deduce the rule, that to represent action of any kind, the figure should be extended to the full limit of the position necessary to produce that action.

Having established this rule, we will now consider how far it is applicable to the action of animals.

We find but little amongst the works of the old Italian masters which can by any stretch of fancy be called a galloping horse.

But few of them attempted horse-painting at all, and those who did make the attempt were content to reproduce with more or less skill the heavy shapeless war-horse of Roman sculpture. These portly animals were represented either at rest or pawing the ground. Sometimes, as in Leonardo da Vinci's "Fight for the Standard," they are rearing, kicking, biting, and displaying every form of equine vice; but we very seldom come across a real galloping or even a trotting horse, until the end of the sixteenth century.

Rubens' horses are often represented galloping, but it must be confessed that they are not getting over the ground very fast. The hind legs are invariably on the ground and the fore legs well bent; just straighten them a little, and you have the prototype of the modern rocking-horse.



This old-fashioned way of representing a horse galloping was blindly adopted by successive generations of artists through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I believe that Carl Vernet (the father of Horace) was the first to innovate. His studies of horses are admirable. Whether walking, trotting, or galloping, their action is always spirited and suggestive. His method has never been improved upon, and probably never will.

It is now about two years since a very remarkable series of instantaneous photographs, representing a horse at full gallop, were brought over to England from America. They were executed with great skill and care by an ingenious gentleman of San Francisco, and have been tested in London by means of an instrument called the praxinoscope, which brings them in succession and at regular intervals before the eye. Their effect seen in this way is marvellous. The grotesque, absurd figures start into life, and the result is a wonderful representation of a race-horse at full speed.

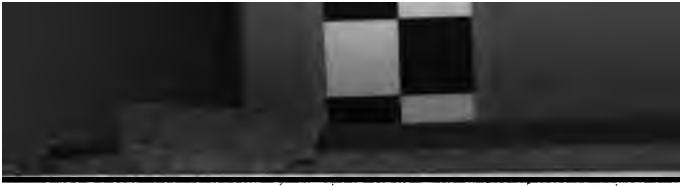
There is therefore no room for doubting the absolute correctness of every one of these diagrams, which I have had enlarged for this lecture. I need not describe in detail the manner in which the original negatives were taken. It will be sufficient to say that electricity was absolutely indispensable for the operation.

Twelve cameras were set up in a line with the

track ; they were placed twenty-seven inches apart, and each negative was taken instantaneously as soon as the galloping horse was opposite the camera. The word "instantaneously" does not at all represent the rapidity with which the negatives were taken. It was calculated that the time for each operation was under $\frac{1}{2000}$ th part of a second. The interval between the production of the negatives was one twenty-fifth of a second, which, if multiplied by twelve, will give about half a second for the completion of the series. The original photographs are of course mere dark silhouettes, but it is very wonderful that any result at all should have been obtained in the $\frac{1}{2000}$ th part of a second. We are told that the "celebrated flyer Sally Gardner was ridden by the jockey Domm at a 1:40 gait in front of the apparatus." The 1:40 gait translated into English means that Sally Gardner was going at the rate of a mile in one minute forty seconds, which certainly is a great pace even for a Derby winner.

Now, it has been known for a great many years that the usual sporting way of representing a racer at full gallop is not correct. Stonehenge, in his book on the horse, published more than twenty years ago, says :—

"To represent the gallop pictorially in a perfectly correct manner is almost impossible ; at all events it has never yet been accomplished ; the ordinary and received interpretation being altogether erroneous.



When carefully watched, the horse in full gallop will be seen to extend himself very much, but not nearly to the length which is assigned to him by artists. To give the idea of high speed, the hind legs are thrust backward and the forelegs forward in a most unnatural position, which, if it could be assumed in reality, would inevitably lead to a fall and most probably to a broken back."

Stonehenge goes on to observe that "many artists have tried to break through the time-honored recipe for drawing a galloping horse, but that the eye at once rebels. The new version may be scientifically correct, but the mind refuses its assent to the idea of great pace which is desired to be given."

Amongst the "many artists" alluded to by Stonehenge I may mention my old acquaintance John Leech. Leech was far too keen an observer to be satisfied with the absolute truth of the ordinary method of representing a horse going across country, and accordingly he tried all kinds of positions for the legs, but always had to go back to some modification of the usually accepted one, viz., all four legs off the ground, and all more or less extended. He remarked to me thirty years ago how impracticable it was to represent the true action of a galloping horse satisfactorily.

I wonder what Stonehenge and Leech would have said, could they have seen these extraordinary photographs. Out of the series of twelve there are only

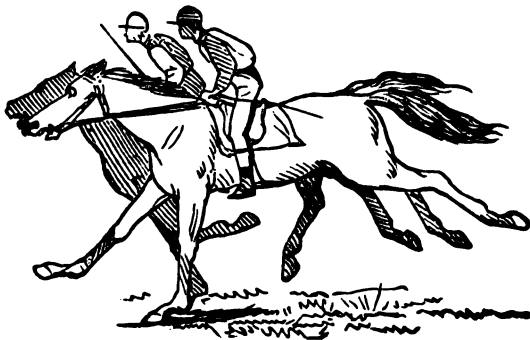
two (Nos. 2 and 3) which give the least idea of galloping, and in these two all the legs are tucked under the horse in a bunch. Well may the editor of the *Field* have written back to America to say that there was some mistake, as, barring two, which looked something like galloping, all the others represented the horse as more or less stationary. To me they looked more like the tricks of a highly-trained steed in a circus.

However grotesque the position of a horse's legs may be, we must (per force) accept them as truthful, and to those sceptics who cannot reconcile their minds to this fact, I would observe that four-footed animals don't fly ; their legs not only touch the ground, but must at one particular 2000th part of a second be vertical, and I am quite sure that under these conditions the cleverest draughtsman would fail to make the horse appear galloping. Géricault, Horace Vernet, and all the best delineators of horses galloping, have represented them with all the feet in the air and the legs more or less extended.

It has now been proved, beyond the possibility of doubt, that this position is never assumed by the horse. Does it follow that the pictures of these artists are all wrong? By no means. Speaking scientifically, they *are* wrong, but science and art, though often bracketed together, are very distinct, and ought to be independent of each other ; so that if the old-fashioned way of representing a racer con-



veys to the mind a better idea of speed than any of these diagrams, we ought to continue to wallow in



our ignorance. It is impossible to say what the art of the future may be. We may get valuable hints from these and future instantaneous photographs; we may learn to modify, to a considerable extent, the time-honored sporting way of depicting horse-races, but I can hardly believe that the struggle for the Derby of 1981 will be represented as above.*

The other paces of the horse, the walk and the trot, have also been photographed by the same gentleman. The results are curious, but there is nothing so outrageously absurd as the "1:40 gait" photographs.

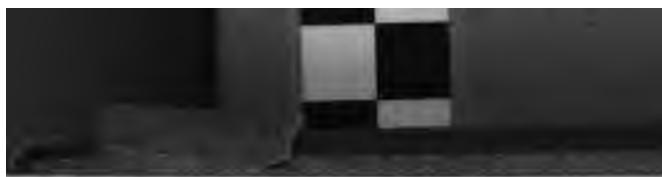
In conclusion, I would caution you against being

* These uncouth attitudes are faithful reproductions of Nos. 1 and 7 of the instantaneous photographic series.

disquieted by any modern investigation of the true action of animals. In art, whatever appears right *is* right, and this seems to me to constitute one of the differences between art and science. I have already said that in drawing men or animals in motion artists are limited to one momentary position, and that care should be taken that *that* momentary position be characteristic of the general action. Thus in the greyhound pursuing the hare, the legs appear even more extended than in the racing horse, and we ought accordingly to represent them in this way, regardless of the literal truth.

What we call action, both in men and animals, is not the attitude at one particular moment, but the combination of various attitudes in rapid succession. To give a perfect representation of action lies, therefore, beyond the province of art. All we can do is to select, or sometimes even to invent, an attitude which, whether true or not true, shall accurately give the general impression of what we want to represent.

We have heard a good deal lately of a new school of painters calling themselves Impressionists. I need hardly say I have but little sympathy with their work. To neglect form, as they ostentatiously do, is to abandon voluntarily the highest quality of art; but I must confess that in drawing animated objects in motion, I am somewhat of an Impressionist myself.



ON DRAWING.

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Wherever from the rapidity of the movement any deliberate drawing of the form is out of the question, I hold it to be much safer to trust to general impressions than to be guided by the results of instantaneous photography.

LECTURE VII.

COLOR.

LECTURES on color are generally semi-scientific discourses. The lecturer explains the theory of primaries and secondaries, and the optical effects produced by contrast, illustrating what he has got to say on the subject by means of colored diagrams. Those who are interested in the singular effect produced by what are called simultaneous and successive contrasts of color had better consult Chevreuil's book on color, which has been translated into English, and is a very exhaustive work on the subject.

From a very slight knowledge of the book I should say that it was more likely to be of use to the designer and manufacturer than to the artist. The author deals almost entirely with flat surfaces of color, and the weakest part of the book is that where he tackles the complex problem of reducing to rule the coloring of pictures. Some of his theories appear to me very fanciful, and some are quite contrary to my own experience. Indeed, it is a question to me whether a scientific knowledge of optics in their relation to color can be of any use to an artist in his profession.



After this preamble you will not be surprised if I do not exhibit to-night any prisms or kaleidoscopic effects of color. Moreover, I don't know enough of the subject to venture to lecture on it.

I shall give you the results of my experiences (*quantum valeant*) not only about colors, but about such prosaic matters as brushes, palettes, and mediums. It appears to me that many a student is kept back or discouraged because his palette is in a hopeless mess; his brushes are like old birch-brooms, and his canvas is slippery and greasy.

If you were learning to write, instead of learning to paint, you would not provide yourselves with stumpy worn-out pens, bad ink, and cartridge paper. You would get fairly good pens and ink and white foolscap, so as to give yourselves a chance.

I don't wish you to be fastidious about the choice of your materials. This is as bad as being too careless; nor do I want to bind you to use the colors and brushes which I myself find most convenient for life studies.

All I desire is that you should not multiply your difficulties unnecessarily by using bad materials.

Before, however, entering on these details, I wish to make a few observations about the effect and contrast of colors.

In the first place, I would observe that, pictorially speaking, no color can, taken individually, be called either pretty or ugly. The duller mud-color, if in

its right place, is charming ; and the most delicate mauve, if in the wrong place, hideous.

Dirt has been defined as matter in the wrong place. No one while digging among his flower-beds would call the rich mould " dirt," but if he proceeds to wipe his spade with his pocket-handkerchief, he will certainly " dirty " it. In the same way when in a picture we speak of a color being ugly or dirty, all we mean is that it appears so with reference to its surroundings. Take the same color and put it in a more harmonious setting, and it will appear all right.

We are told by scientific writers on color, that the primaries (red, yellow, and blue) harmonize with their secondaries, viz., red with green, yellow with purple, and blue with orange. This is no doubt true in a general way, but it is by no means invariably true. Any color will, under certain conditions, harmonize with any other, provided they are of the proper shade, and the surrounding setting and background are suitable ; whilst, on the other hand, we often see in pictures by bad colorists the most orthodox combination of reds and greens, which, instead of being harmonious, are painfully discordant.

The truth is that color cannot be subjected to theoretical rules. The only safe book for the student to consult is the Book of Nature. He will there find no limit to the harmonious combinations of the primary and secondary colors. Do the golden blos-



soms of the ragwort or the blue-bells of the wild hyacinth not harmonize with their respective green leaves? Are the orange orchards of the South, or the mingled blue, green, and gold of the peacock's plumage, unpleasant to the eye? And yet these combinations of color violate the rules laid down by theorists.

Another obvious truth to be gleaned from Nature, and which may be made applicable to art, is that she varies her tints according to climate. In the plumage and coloring of exotic birds and insects we find the most gorgeous combinations of bright colors. In the parrot-house of the Zoölogical Gardens we see red and blue, orange and purple, blue and green plumages of the most brilliant hues. The coloring of these birds, although not as discordant as their voices, seems in our gray climate too crude and violent, but in their native tropical forests, with an intensely blue sky overhead, the crudity would disappear, and they would be as much in keeping with the surrounding scenery as eagles and hawks are on our mountains, black and white seafowl on our coasts, or sparrows in our streets.

The truth appears to be that in color there are various scales of intensity and strength. If the key-note, or, in other words, the most decided color in your picture, be strong and vivid, you will have to carry out the whole picture on the same scale. If it be of a delicate or neutral tint, you must treat the remainder of the picture accordingly.

Good specimens of old stained-glass windows, where the strongest reds, blues, greens, and yellows are seen in juxtaposition, are fine examples of a powerful rich harmony of color, and many pictures of the Dutch school are very good illustrations of harmony of a delicate gray kind.

This sort of low-toned harmony is much more easily obtained than the stronger and richer kind. The reason for this is that faults of color and errors of taste are much less conspicuous in a gray picture than in a brilliantly colored one. In the former all the costumes are of a whitey-brown, buff, or slate color, and an injudicious distribution of these Quaker-like tints would be hardly noticeable ; but in a work where strong reds, yellows, blues, and blacks predominate, the substitution of one color for another would be fatal to the picture.

In landscape again, it is far easier to paint the gray land of mountain and mist than the brilliant sunshine of the South. Any one who honestly attempts to depict the blue Mediterranean sparkling in the sunshine will probably be severely criticised, whilst his neighbor who has painted the kind of Highland scenery we all know so well, will get praised for his painstaking truthfulness, although his picture may be in every respect inferior as a transcript of nature to the Southern one.

The axiom to be derived from this is, that whatever your subject may be, whether figures or landscape,



it is comparatively easy to succeed as a colorist in a low or gray scale of color.

I do not mean to recommend any shirking of difficulties, and if your subject is of a nature which requires brilliant coloring, by all means endeavor to paint it up to the mark ; but in decorative work, and in pictures which admit of a tender and soft coloring, you will do well to select grays, bluish greens, and broken tints generally.

Your shortcomings will be less conspicuous, and you will avoid the risk of becoming tawdry and vulgar.

Some men are born with a strong natural feeling for color, and a good many more fancy they have this gift without really possessing it. Some have an exceptionally dull sense for color, and although they may be quite able to distinguish red from green, yet they cannot be taught to discriminate between different shades of the same color.

To students belonging to any of these three classes I am afraid my lecture will be of no use.

The first—that is, the born colorists—will instinctively use harmonious tints, and their natural feeling will be a better guide to them than any lectures. The second class—namely, those who fondly believe themselves to be colorists—will, of course, not attend to any thing I may say ; and those to whom nature has denied a sense of color are unteachable, just as it is hopeless to teach music to a man who has no ear.

The great majority, however, of students belong to none of these exceptional classes. They have an average sense of color, just as they have an average sense of form ; and although I am quite aware that practice and experience will alone improve and develop their power of coloring, yet a few practical hints may facilitate and shorten their studies.

I assume that whatever method is adopted for painting flesh, the object ought to be to get it like nature. I don't mean necessarily like the model, but like what nature would be under the conditions imposed by the subject, and it is very necessary continually to bear in mind what those conditions are. It will not do (if you have an open-air subject to paint) to copy your model faithfully as he appears in the studio, and then put in a sky and background from your out-of-door studies.

Although the whole picture might truly be said to be painted from nature, yet it would certainly not look right. The figures would have been painted under one condition of light, and the landscape under another.

You cannot be expected, except under peculiar circumstances, to paint direct from your model out-of-doors, but you may take careful notice of the difference between studio light and shade and open-air effect. I must do modern painters the justice to say that this difference is much more generally recognized than it was twenty years ago. Formerly a



group of figures used to be painted with more or less care from models as they appeared in the studio, the aperture which admitted light being often not more than three or four feet wide. It was immaterial to the artist whether the scene of his subject was an apartment similarly lighted, or an open heath ; and the consequence was that the picture, however cleverly it might be painted, had an unreal appearance whenever a landscape background was introduced. This discrepancy must have been felt, and hence no doubt we may account for the perfectly conventional landscape backgrounds we notice in many pictures by the masters of the last century. Instead of the old artifice of spoiling the landscape for the sake of the figures, it is much better and healthier art to paint the figures to suit the landscape. We cannot do this completely unless we paint the whole picture on the spot, and then we should not have the same command over the arrangement of the groups as we have in the studio ; but we *can* make an approximation toward this desirable end, and it is satisfactory to notice that many young artists, both French and English, are making efforts in this direction, and thus studying the ever-varying effects of color and light in the only way in which they ought to be studied. If you do not feel equal to the task of thus modifying your studio work, choose some subject where the scene is an interior, analogous to your own room, and then you may

copy literally the color and light and shade of your models and draperies.

I am not going to give any recipe for painting flesh ; some English artists and the great majority of foreigners paint it in at once as near nature as they can. Others model it first in what is technically called dead color, and finish with transparent or semi-transparent tints. If the result is good, it matters little how it has been obtained. Every artist has his own method, and he generally adheres to it, either because he is accustomed to it, or because it suits his style of composition and drawing. I shall therefore confine the remarks I have to make on color to the harmonious arrangement of backgrounds, draperies, and costumes.

First, as to backgrounds. It is a curious fact, which any one can verify, that if you have painted a head and you find the color too hot and red, the proper remedy is to paint the background of a cool green or some cold color. Naturally one would suppose that on the principle of contrasts the cool-colored background would make the head appear redder. Such, however, is certainly not the case. A vermilion curtain behind your rubicund gentleman would make him appear more objectionably rubicund, but a cool gray or green would have the contrary effect.

On the other hand, if you want warmth of color in your head, paint a red background to it. If you



try to give warmth to it by setting it in a cold background you will make it look more ghastly than it did.

The only explanation I can offer for this apparent anomaly is that the eye gets filled or saturated with the color of the background until the head seems to partake of it. In the first example the eye gets filled with cool green, and thus the redness of the head becomes less apparent. In the second example, the optic nerves get accustomed to a hot color, and so the pallor of the head disappears.

In my opinion a colored sketch or water-color drawing gains brilliancy by being mounted on a white ground, whereas, according to theory, the dazzling whiteness of the mount ought to make the drawing look dingy.

In the same way, supposing you have painted a series of figures for the decoration of a pediment or frieze, and you find that your figures are dull and heavy in color, how are you to remedy this without repainting them? My answer would be, Give them a gold or light bright-colored background. It is not only that this bright background enlivens the whole work, but it has the effect of making each individual figure appear less dull in color.

Although experience has taught me that these apparently anomalous effects are produced with color, yet, of course, where black and white alone are concerned, the law of contrast follows its natural

course ; that is, if you want to give brilliancy to a white spot, surround it with black ; and if you want to give darkness to a black spot, surround it with white.

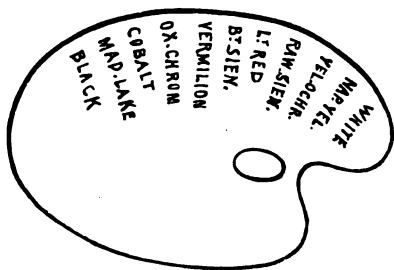
In a composition of several figures, it is almost always desirable to assist the effect by selecting white or light-colored draperies for the figures in the light, and dark colors for the figures in the shade.

This principle may, of course, be carried too far, but as a general rule it may be depended on.

A good deal has been said by Sir J. Reynolds and others in praise of a simple palette, and with much of this I cordially agree ; still I think that in the ordinary practice of figure-painting nine or ten colors are indispensable.

If I give you my own palette, it is not that I wish to dictate to you what colors to employ, but simply as a foundation for the remarks I am going to make about the colors generally used. First, with regard to white.

White lead is the pigment all but universally used in oil-painting. Many years ago I tried zinc-white. It was strongly recommended, on the ground that it did not turn yellow or black with age like white lead. I believe it has this good quality, but it wants opacity





and body ; and although I think it might be used with great advantage in skies, or for scumbling, I don't think it can ever replace white lead for flesh-painting.

We next come to Naples yellow. I am no chemist, and do not profess to tell you what Naples yellow is made of, any more than I could inform you of what London butter is made. There are a great many shades of this useful color, but I think that the pale greenish variety is the most serviceable. The French have *jaune de Naples ordinaire*, *jaune brillant*, and three shades of *jaune Pinard*. Our color-men have pale and deep Naples yellow, of various shades, and lemon yellow besides. Of all these varieties, I prefer the light-colored *jaune Pinard*. In painting flesh it will be found useful, especially in the reflected light of the shadows, where white lead would probably create heaviness and opacity ; but it is in light-colored draperies, in gold-embroidered brocades, and in glowing sunsets that Naples yellow of some kind becomes indispensable. Yellow ochre ought to be a simple earth, tinted yellow in nature's laboratory ; but, like the aforesaid Naples yellow, you cannot tell what the contents of the tube you purchase as yellow ochre really are.

The *terra chiara*, which, in Italian fresco, replaces our yellow ochre, is perfectly durable, but no yellow ochre that I ever bought in London would resist the action of the lime.

Hence I conclude that the yellow ochre of the trade is not a genuine earth. However that may be, it is quite indispensable on the palette, and in oil-paintings seems perfectly durable. Roman ochre, golden ochre, and other varieties are quite unnecessary if you have yellow ochre on your palette ; but brown ochre is capital for one particular purpose, and for nothing else that I know of. The purpose of which I am speaking is for painting a dead white luminous bit of wall or pavement. If you mellow your white lead with a very little brown ochre, you will get a luminous compound which is neither yellow nor red, and is totally dissimilar to your flesh tint.

Of raw sienna I would speak with great respect, as it is perfectly durable in fresco-work, where yellow ochre drops off the wall and disintegrates every thing it is mixed with. Nevertheless, raw sienna wants body ; when ground in oil, and except perhaps for landscape-painting, I hardly ever use it.

Before exhausting the yellows, I may mention that the only violent yellow you ought ever to admit on your palette is cadmium. Chromes of all kinds are rank poison, and cadmium, though quite safe, is a difficult color to manage with discretion.

Light red is burnt ochre, and is one of the most useful colors of the palette for painting flesh. Mixed with white and a very little yellow it is the foundation of all flesh-painting. The French light red, or



"*brun rouge*," as it is called, is much better than ours. It is a little more pink in color, and is generally pleasanter to work with.

We now come to vermilion. Of this color there are two kinds in common use, the Chinese and the so-called extract of vermilion. I should think it hardly necessary to have both kinds on the palette, but some artists, who are much better colorists than I can pretend to be, think otherwise; and although they omit altogether umbers and browns of all sorts, yet never lay their palette without both sorts of vermilion.

Burnt sienna is the next color on our palette, and is of universal use. It is the best color to use for giving warmth to shades, and for preparing draperies or stuffs which are ultimately to be blue or green. Of course, one may use it too much, but it never gives opacity and heaviness, which any other red would do if employed for a similar purpose.

There are many other reds. Venetian red is hardly to be distinguished from light red. Indian red is a deep laky red, and very opaque. I don't think it is much used now, but formerly it was in great request for painting flesh. Etty was very fond of it.

The so-called Mars reds are perfectly durable, but all these colors are quite unnecessary.

Of the lakes the most useful for general purposes is madder lake. Some of them, such as yellow lake

and scarlet lake, are very fugitive and not safe to use. Rose madder and purple madder are expensive, and, except for very rich stuffs, are seldom wanted. There are several varieties of brown and yellow madders, which may be used with advantage in landscape, but which are never really wanted for figure-painting.

Green is a color which is not absolutely necessary if you have blue on the palette, still it is sometimes very useful for the half tones. Oxide of chromium is the best of the decided greens, but I think that the French *vert de Cobalt* is more generally useful. This is a bluish green, and a most excellent color for painting skies.

Terra verte has no body in it, and I find it turns black very speedily. Malachite green is a sickly color that I cannot recommend ; and what we used to call emerald green, but which the French call *vert veronese*, is rank poison on the palette.

Almost all the rich dark greens required for foliage and verdure in landscape-painting can be obtained by a judicious mixture of blues and yellows. French ultramarine, mixed with raw or burnt sienna, gives a strong dark green, which is not at all heavy, and every landscape-painter discovers new combinations of blues and blacks with yellows and reds, which enable him to give the infinite variety of nature.

As for blues, the only colors I can recommend



are cobalt and French ultramarine. The colors known as ultramarine ash and mineral gray are sometimes useful, but they can very easily be imitated on the palette. I never use either Prussian, Antwerp, or any other cyaneous blue ; and I think that, at any rate for figure-painting, they are unnecessary.

You will observe that I have not put any brown on the palette, not even umber.

I am quite aware that with many painters, especially English ones, raw umber is considered a *sine qua non*, and I thought so myself a few years ago.

I took, however, a dislike to it from a conviction that it turned black, and I fancy that I have done better since I discarded it. It is very seldom seen on the palettes of foreign artists. Asphaltum and bitumen are very seductive colors, but, as every one knows, they have been the ruin of many excellent pictures, and it is well to steer clear of them. I think, however, that either color, when mixed with white lead, is tolerably safe, and nothing else that I know of gives so effectively and pleasantly the gray hair and fur of animals.

In blacks, you have ivory or blue black, both excellent colors, and there is also a charcoal black which is much more gray than either of the others, and has very little body. I think, when mixed with white, that it may be useful in painting clouds. It is generally gritty and badly ground, but for the

purpose I mention, I don't think this fault matters much.

Before taking leave of the palette, I may be expected to say something about brushes and mediums.

First, as to brushes :

As to the size of the brushes, this depends very much on the taste and habits of the artist.

I am fond of small ones myself, not necessarily sables, but small hog's hair tools, and I should recommend them to beginners, who wish to express form as well as color in their work.

I never use flat brushes for painting flesh, and very seldom for any thing else, but this is merely an old habit.

Every one is perfectly right to use the tools which he finds the most convenient, only let them be good of their kind, and always kept in working order.

Now as to mediums :

This is a subject on which I speak with diffidence, as opinions vary greatly about these compounds. I think, however, that I may safely say that the less they are used by students the better. By mediums, I mean the various copal jellies which are sold in tubes, and placed on the palette like the colors.

I do not say that they are unsafe to use in moderation, but moderation is said by teetotalers to be a virtue more difficult to practise than total abstinence.



For a great many years I used them, and have only quite lately discarded them altogether in favor of clarified poppy oil. This oil is a very slow drier, and is, therefore, peculiarly suitable for Academy students' work. It continually happens that a student prepares a larger portion of the figure than he can finish in one day. The next day it is too dry to continue the modelling, and yet not dry enough for glazing and repainting.

If he has painted it with poppy oil, he will find it in a very workable state for two or even three days.

Nothing can be safer, provided of course the picture is painted throughout with the same slow drier. The best and purest poppy oil is known by the name of *huile chromophile*. It has a strong smell of castor-oil, which to susceptible persons may be rather an objection.

I shall not attempt a criticism of the various oils and essences which are to be found at the color-man's. What is one man's meat is another man's poison, and I even go farther and say, that the same man at one period of his career will swear by some compound which a few years afterward he will regard with special aversion. The only advice I give to young artists is to use the simplest materials they can, both for mediums and colors; and I may add, that the better the colorist, the simpler his palette generally is.

I have seen on some foreign artists' palettes as many as six different kinds of lake, when one would have been quite sufficient, and I need hardly say that whatever other merit their pictures may have had, they were not distinguished for brilliant color.

After all, it is only natural that it should be so.

An artist who is not a good colorist must (unless he is blinded by conceit) have some suspicion of his deficiency, and would naturally endeavor by a more elaborate palette to remedy his shortcomings, just as some of our bad cooks endeavor to improve their cuisine by a liberal use of made sauces. With artists as with cooks, the remedy is unsuccessful ; in both cases it is taste that is wanted, and not a multiplicity of ingredients.

If a student has a germ of feeling for color, he may develop it into a plant of respectable growth. He will probably never become a great colorist, but he may at any rate learn to attain a certain degree of harmony and propriety, qualities which are not always found in the works of noted colorists.

I would strongly deprecate the habit of painting pictures up to exhibition pitch. Paint them up to the pitch you see in nature, and you will have quite enough to do. Exaggeration is not force, and although a soberly-colored work may be eclipsed on the exhibition walls by a dazzling neighbor, yet it will more than hold its own when removed from the glare and glitter of its surroundings.



Color, as understood by many people, means violent contrasts of reds, blues, and yellows. Now, I am far from saying that strong contrasts and positive colors are always inharmonious. We have (even in our climate) plenty of wild flowers to prove the contrary. The scarlet poppy, the blue corn flower, the common yellow buttercup, are all as positive in color as red, blue, and yellow well can be, but the green stalk and leaves of each plant harmonize perfectly with the flower, and the contrast, though strong, is never offensive. The kind of contrasts I am deprecating are perhaps best known by the epithet "vulgar." Look at the cheap colored glass windows which abound in our country churches, and which are generally much admired by the congregation. As a rule, the more crude the colors, the more grateful are the farmers and their wives to the donors of these windows for giving them something cheerful to look at during the service. We need not go into the country for specimens of vulgar taste in color. I never pass a London pillar letter-box without an uncomfortable feeling, particularly after it has been newly painted.

The post-office authorities are certainly not bound to educate the eye of the British public, and their object in painting these post-boxes vermilion was of course to make them more conspicuous, just as a red flag is used to indicate danger. But the daily press, and particularly that sheet which claims the

largest circulation in the world, praised the authorities for "giving us a bit of color" to refresh the eye. Had these letter-boxes been painted of a laky Indian red, or of a bronze color, they would have been unobjectionable, but no one would have thought of commending them as "bits of color."

Again, if we consider the scheme of clothing the volunteer regiments in scarlet, and try to account for the enthusiasm with which certain corps have hailed the innovation, we shall find that the "bit of color" is at the bottom of it. It can hardly be supposed that the gallant East-end volunteers wish to be mistaken for militiamen; it must be that the scarlet cloth is thought becoming, both by themselves and their female relatives. If I am not mistaken, the West-end corps, such as the Queen's, the Inns of Court, and especially the artists, will be very loth to give up their gray uniforms and don the national red.

I am afraid that the average Englishman's taste in color (though much improved of late years) is still but little more refined than the West African's. If he no longer buys hideous wall-papers and vulgar carpets, it is not that he dislikes them, but that he does not know where to get them, so great has been the improvement in our manufactures. If we turn from the English Philistine to the English artist, we find ourselves at the opposite pole. He has often such a horror of loud, vulgar tints, that he is apt to fall into the affectation of painting on too subdued a



scale, and I would caution you against this affectation. Truth is not necessarily dull, nor is simplicity monochromatic. There is no danger of the general public, which delights in the red coats of our soldiers, and thinks the crudest colored dyes the prettiest, encouraging you to paint sad olive pictures. The danger comes from the select few who are gifted with æsthetic tastes, and who, having recently awakened to the fact that crude contrasts do not constitute color, fall into the opposite extreme, and praise whatever is negative and colorless.

The dismal view of nature seems to me an unhealthy view ; and although it may be commended as a reaction against vulgar, tawdry color, the art which it tends to foster is morbid and unsound.

Beauty of color is a much more subtle and indefinable quality than beauty of form. We are all pretty well agreed that the antique is the nearest approach to perfection of form which has ever been made, but we are by no means agreed about color. Some will think that Titian was the greatest colorist that ever lived, some Velasquez, some Paul Veronese, and some Rembrandt ; and it is not only individual opinions that differ, but the collective opinion of the age. We all are familiar with instances of pictures which are now highly prized for their color, but which within the present century failed to gain admission to any exhibition.

Delacroix's pictures used to be regularly rejected,

or very badly hung, and these same pictures are now considered the gems of the gallery at Versailles. On our side of the Channel we used to turn out Muller's, and, I believe, Constable's pictures. These acts of what we should call injustice were not committed from any Academic spite or jealousy. They were simply the expression of the general public opinion at that time.

It may be noted that our predecessors in this country were by no means indifferent to color. On the contrary, they prided themselves on being the *crème de la crème* of colorists, and any one who expressed admiration for the color of Gros and Géricault would be looked upon as a kind of traitor to the English school.

It was a generally accepted article of belief in England, that the French could draw, but knew nothing about color, and that for fine coloring you must look at home.

We have less national prejudice now, and I hope that we are in a better path toward forming a right judgment than our predecessors were. They almost always judged of the color of a picture by comparing it with similar works by the old masters, and if it reminded them of Titian, Correggio, Rubens, or some other acknowledged colorist, it was pronounced a fine thing. If it were unlike the work of any accepted master of color, it was thought nothing of, however true it might be to nature. Hence as



Constable's pictures resembled neither Claude, Cuyp, nor Ruysdael, they were disliked by the connoisseurs of the period, and were quite unsalable.

A remnant of this artificial way of judging pictures still lingers amongst us, but, speaking generally, the present generation has ceased to take this narrow view of color.

Mistakes in judgment are no doubt made, and posterity may pronounce a different verdict on some of our favorites; still the principle on which we decide whether a man is to be called a colorist or not, is sound.

The principle is briefly this:—That however unusual or novel the coloring of a picture may be, if it reminds one vividly of some harmony of nature, if there is space and air in it, and if the same atmosphere pervades the whole canvas, it is the work of a real colorist.

I have abstained in this lecture from giving you any of the old-fashioned recipes for coloring (such as keeping the shades warm and lights cool, and *vice versa*), because I think that all such rules have a tendency to cramp and fetter the artist who follows them. Nothing can be more dissimilar than the works of the Florentine Ghirlandajo and the portraits of Rembrandt, and yet few will deny the right of both these painters to rank as colorists. I might bracket Titian with Rubens, or Correggio with Ostade, to show how broad is the path which leads to excellence in color.

An innate sense of the harmonious color in nature, and a steadfast determination, by hook or by crook, to reproduce an echo of this harmony on your canvas, must ultimately lead to a good result.

No original colorist could tell you by what process he arrives at the effects he obtains. His only secret (if secret it be) is that he observes more closely and intelligently than other men. It is not the colors he uses, nor the canvas, nor the medium, nor even the technical skill of his hand which cause his pictures to look like nature, whilst his neighbor's look like paint. It is simply what phrenologists would call his bump of color, but what I (who do not believe in bumps) would term his keen appreciation of the harmony of nature, and his retentive memory which enables him to reproduce in his studio the fleeting effects he has seen.

I cannot promise you that by adopting the same method you will all become great colorists ; but of this you may rest assured, that habits of observation and repeated attempts at rendering honestly and faithfully what you have seen, will tend to improve your color far more than all the rules that have ever been laid down, and all the lectures that have ever been delivered.



LECTURE VIII.

ON DECORATIVE PAINTING.

By decorative painting, I mean moral figure-painting. Ornamental designs are a very important factor in all decorative work, but as this branch of the art is out of my province, I shall say nothing about it.

The great mistake most artists make when they have a large wall-space to decorate with figures, is to proceed in the same way as they would for an easel picture. Elaborate finish, powerful light and shade, expression and individuality in the heads, are all excellent qualities in an easel picture, but they are by no means necessary in decorative work.

On the other hand, a well-balanced and harmonious composition, a pure and grand style of drawing, and great breadth and luminosity of coloring are absolutely essential for good decorative work.

These are all qualities which are never got by dexterity of hand, dodges about color, or chance, to which much of the fascination of oil-painting on canvas must be attributed. They are only attainable by patient and laborious work. I will endeavor

to show you, step by step, what the nature of this work is.

It is always advisable for decorative work of any importance to make a cartoon of the size of the painting, and, if possible, after the completion of the cartoon, to have it put up *in situ*, so that the size of the figures, the arrangement of the groups, and the general effect may be judged of.

If the result is satisfactory, the work may be considered three parts done. Should there, however, be any alterations required, they should be carried out on the cartoon. Nothing which requires alteration should be left knowingly. There will always be plenty of unforeseen changes suggesting themselves during the progress of the painting, without complicating matters by having an imperfect cartoon.

For fresco-painting a cartoon is absolutely necessary.

In the course of this lecture I will describe the process of fresco-painting. Before, however, proceeding to speak of the different methods of painting, we will first consider the preliminary operations.

The first thing to be done, even before a stroke of charcoal sullies the spotless purity of our cartoon paper, is to get an idea of the kind of arrangement which it will be best to adopt. This pursuit of an idea for the general arrangement of our subject is of course entirely brain-work, but as soon as an idea



is got, the hand comes into play ; not, however, with charcoal on the big cartoon, but with pen and ink or pencil in the scrap-book.

I always think the clearest way of describing any process is to take an example. We will therefore take an example, and suppose that we are lucky enough to have the decoration of a town-hall or some similar building in a large seaport town entrusted to us, and that it has been suggested to us by our employers that groups of figures representing all countries would be appropriate.

Very well, we don't at once seize a stick of charcoal and begin drawing promiscuously. We think first how we can best fit our subject into the space allotted to us.

How are we to arrange our personages? Shall we group them irrespective of their nationality, like the figures in Delaroche's "Hemicycle" ; or shall we adopt a kind of geographical arrangement? Shall we have a centre figure or group? Shall we introduce architecture into the background, as Raffaele has done in the "School of Athens" ?

These and a dozen other questions of vital importance to our design have all to be settled before the cartoon is begun, and we must be guided in our settlement very much by the nature of the building, the shape of the panel, the height of the work from the ground, etc. The decorative painter ought always to bear in mind that his work is supplementary to

that of the architect. Inattention to this self-evident truism has been the cause of many failures. In an easel picture we order the frame to suit the picture. We don't paint the picture to suit the frame ; but in mural painting the reverse ought always to be the rule. Of course, there are cases—as, for instance, in museums and picture galleries—where the works of art are the jewel and the building the setting ; but these works of art are not decorative. The very word decorative implies subserviency to that which has to be decorated.

To return to our imaginary work ; I will suppose we have decided that a central group of figures is desirable, and that England, as the greatest maritime power in the world, ought to occupy the place of honor. Moreover, not being of the “ Perish India ” school, we think that she ought to be supported by her colonies. We will, therefore, surround her with figures representing Canada, India, Australia, etc.

Having so far settled our scheme of composition, we must abandon our idea of a geographical arrangement. We find that it is more logical to arrange our figures according to the importance of the countries they represent, than according to their latitude and longitude. We will accordingly place in the immediate vicinity of our central group, representatives of France, the United States, Germany, Italy, etc. We then gradually descend to less civilized countries, until finally we reach the remote corners, which we



reserve for barbarians like our late enemy King Coffee.

The next point for our consideration would be, How are we to represent England? Certainly not as a pseudo-classical Minerva with a trident in her hand, and the British lion at her feet ; still less as an obese, ill-tempered John Bull. We may leave this venerable joke to the comic press.

We must try and invent something new, which shall be characteristic of England, and yet neither commonplace nor grotesque.

We may, however, leave the costume and action of our Britannia for future consideration. We have made up our minds that Britannia must be typified by a female figure, but farther than this we need not go at present. Having got the key-note (as it may be called) of the composition, we shall have no difficulty in determining that all the other civilized countries must also be represented by female figures.

It will not probably be advisable to clothe these figures in their respective national costumes ; such a mode of treatment would be incompatible with a grand style of decoration. It will, nevertheless, be quite allowable to vary their features and complexion according to the nationality they represent, and to give them something, either flowers, fruit, grain, or produce, which will help to identify them.

Having got thus far, we may begin to map out our groups on the cartoon.

We do not engage models until we have approximately decided on the various attitudes we wish our figures to assume.

Some must be standing, some sitting, and very possibly some kneeling or reclining. We try these various attitudes on the cartoon, sketching them in very lightly with soft charcoal. We transfer and shift them about until we get an harmonious and pleasant arrangement of line, not too symmetrical, and yet sufficiently so to give an air of grandeur and repose to the work. These figures need not, of course, be more than indicated, but they ought to be tolerably correct in proportion, and the attitudes should be natural, or at any rate possible.

It is here that a knowledge of anatomy is especially useful to the young artist. When a man has been drawing figures for forty years he ought to draw the human form very much as he forms the letters of the alphabet when writing ; but until long experience has given him this kind of facility, he will find his studies of anatomy and proportion of the greatest benefit to him. He will save many a long and profitless morning's work from a model, and save his pocket too.

It is when the cartoon is in this state of progress—that is, when the size of the figures, the general arrangement of the different groups, and their relative position have been settled approximately—that it is so desirable to hoist it up to its place on



the wall. Any alteration can be made now much easier than later ; certain figures or even whole groups may want to be shifted a few inches, certain actions modified, the line of heads may require revisal, and so on ; and it is obvious that what can be done now with a few lines of charcoal, would at a later period involve a great amount of rubbing out and a great waste of labor.

Having at last decided on the proportions and positions of the various groups and single figures, we may now begin to work from the living model ; and here it may perhaps not be out of place if I give you some advice about the selection of your models.

I would strongly advise you to engage those who are intelligent and apt, rather than those who may be better proportioned, but who are stiff and awkward. What you want in the present stage of your work is natural and graceful action, and with some models it is hopeless to struggle in this direction.

When I was a student in Paris, there were some three or four models who were so intelligent (and I may say so artistic) that they naturally put themselves into the attitudes wanted, and even suggested and assumed other positions which were often adopted by the artist.

In violent and spontaneous action suitable for battle pictures these models were invaluable, and the decline of many a great reputation in historical



painting dates from the death of these humble assistants, some of whom could neither read nor write. I am afraid the race is extinct, but even in the present generations of models some are far superior in artistic feeling to others. In our present cartoon, however, we do not require any violent action ; all we need is perfect ease and dignity.

As our personages are to be clothed, it will be unnecessary to make careful nude studies. Nevertheless, it will be well to get rough outline drawings from the nude of all the figures, just to correct and verify the proportions of our personages.

Two or three of these nude studies can be made in a day. If the artist is an experienced draughtsman, there may not be much to correct on the large cartoon ; but let him be ever so experienced, there is always something wrong about the attitude of figures drawn without models, and occasionally very gross mistakes are made.

I knew a very clever draughtsman in Paris who made the mistake of giving one of his figures two right hands, and he did not find it out until he began to work from nature.

In an outstretched arm, the twist of the radius and ulna makes all the difference about the position of the thumb, and if the thumb be placed on the wrong side of the hand, you immediately make a right hand of what ought to be a left, and *vice versa*.

I will assume now that we have corrected the



drawing of our cartoon from our small nude studies.

We are fully aware that the drawing of every figure will have to be perfected from nature, that is, the head, neck, arms, hands, and feet; but we are satisfied that the attitudes are all possible, and that there is no great fault in the proportions. *Now*, therefore, we may look out for models for the heads, arms, feet, etc., and work with chalk or charcoal (if it can be fixed) on the cartoon itself.

And here let me caution you against ever working from a model whom you know to be unsuitable. If, as often happens, you engage a model, and find when you have got him into position that he won't do, pay him his sitting and send him away. It is better to lose five shillings than to lose five shillings and your morning's work into the bargain.

At this stage of progress we ought to be draping our figures as well as drawing the heads and hands.

Whatever may be said about small easel pictures, I am quite sure that for large mural work a lay figure is indispensable. In adjusting draperies on a lay figure a good deal of ingenuity, and, above all, a good deal of patience, are necessary.

Nothing is so stupid as a lay figure, and many artists prefer studying their draperies on the living model; but the studies thus done will very seldom have the precision and finish of those done from the lay figure. They are, therefore, less suitable for large cartoon-work.

I will now suppose that all our figures are draped, and the heads and hands finished. There still remains the selection of the different symbols or attributes which are to give nationality to our personages, and here we must endeavor to reconcile truth with pictorial fitness. We have the whole vegetable and animal kingdom to choose from, and it will go hard if we cannot fit each female figure with some flower, fruit, bird, or beast, which shall be typical of the country she represents and at the same time ornamental and graceful.

The cartoon is now, at last finished, and the next thing to be done is to make a colored sketch. I need not go through this process at length. Every one knows that the scheme of color intended at first is often abandoned, and minor changes are innumerable. At last, however, we get what we think a good result, and all our preliminary work is over. Not quite, however, for we have to trace the cartoon on transparent paper, and prick the tracing.

Some artists omit the tedious process of pricking the tracing, but the labor that is thus saved is fully counterbalanced by the trouble of following all the lines of the tracing with a point before an impression can be got, whereas with a pricked tracing a bag of pounded charcoal does the work at once.

I will now give a short account of the different mediums principally in use for mural painting.

The first medium I shall notice is oil, or some modification of oil. The great objection to oil for mural work is the impossibility of seeing the painting when it faces the light. An absorbent ground will to a certain extent mitigate this evil. The use of spirits of turpentine, benzine, and other essences, will also contribute toward giving a flat surface; but do what we will, we can never get in an oil-painting the pure, clear qualities of water-color or fresco.

The compound known as Parris' medium and sold by Roberson, is not a bad thing for diminishing the shine of oil-painting. It is made of white wax dissolved in spirits of lavender, but I am inclined to think that an absorbent ground prepared with parchment size and whiting is the best preventive of the greasy surface inseparable from oil-painting. The great desideratum in all mural and decorative oil-painting is that every part should have an equal amount of shine.

Take an ordinary oil-picture and place it opposite the light. The lighter parts will be tolerably well seen, but the oily or gummy darks will reflect the light of the sky and spoil the effect completely.

All we can aspire to, in decorative oil-painting, is to give to the dark parts as little shine as there is in the light ones, where white lead and opaque colors generally have been freely used.

I cannot say as much in favor of wax as a medium for grinding the colors in. It is neither fish, flesh,

nor good red herring; that is, it has neither the richness of oil nor the luminosity of fresco. Most of the modern decorative pictures in the Paris churches are painted with this medium. The colors are much the same as for oil-painting, but the blacks, browns, and lakes have a very dull appearance. The fluid medium used for painting is a kind of essential oil of lavender, so that this method, if somewhat deficient in light, is at any rate overflowing with sweetness.

I have found that to use the ordinary oil-colors diluted with a medium composed of wax, mastic varnish and turpentine, is by far preferable to legitimate wax-painting. The colors are much more manageable and dry brighter, without having any more shine than when actually ground with wax.

What is called encaustic painting has also wax as a foundation, but is quite a different process to "*peinture à la cire*." "Encaustic" implies burning, and in this method of painting the colors are laid on rather thick, and when the work or any portion of it has to be finished, a hot iron is applied to melt the wax and allow the brush to do its softening and finishing work.

The Pompeii paintings are mostly done in this way, but it is very unfitted for large figure-painting.

Distemper has many excellent qualities, but its want of durability will always prevent its being used for costly and important work.

It might, however, be made much more durable



than it generally is, by a careful selection of materials.

Distemper is generally associated with scene-painting or some temporary work, for which any rubbish can be used ; but if care were taken about the size and the colors, and above all if some coating of silica were floated over the finished painting to protect it from damp and atmospheric changes, I see no reason why this very pleasant method should not be generally used.

The so-called silica method has been much used in Germany under the name of Wasserglas. I have no experience in this method, and therefore cannot enter into detail. Speaking generally, the process consists in painting on a dry surface with colors simply ground in water, and fixing the colors afterward by the spray of silicated water. I believe that after this silication the work can be retouched and even repainted ; subject, however, to another fixing by silication.

We now come to the best and grandest style of decorative work ; namely, legitimate fresco. People who don't know much about painting are very apt to call any picture on a wall a fresco, but I suppose I need hardly tell you that oil- or wax-paintings on walls are no more frescoes than is an oil sketch on paper a water-color.

In all the methods of painting I have mentioned, some medium is used to fix the color. It is either

oil, copal, wax, size, or silica, but in fresco no vehicle of any kind except water is used. How then is the color fixed? How have Michael Angelo's and even Giotto's frescoes lasted to the present day? We all know that if some powdered color is mixed with water and applied by a brush to a wall, it will stick as long as it is wet, but as soon as the water evaporates, the color returns to the powder it was before, and falls off, or brushes off with the slightest friction. The reason that frescoes can be dusted and washed without effacing the color, is that they were originally painted on *wet* mortar, and the lime of which the mortar is composed has the property of retaining and fixing the color.

I will now describe the whole process of fresco-painting.

The first care ought to be the wall. A brick wall is the best, but stone will do very well, provided every precaution has been taken against damp. On this wall there ought to be a coating of strong rough mortar about half an inch thick. The surface ought not to be smoothed with the trowel, but left rather uneven. As soon as this mortar is thoroughly dry, the fresco may be begun. I have already told you that all real fresco is painted on wet mortar, but the mortar, or *intonaco*, as the Italians call it, is not the rough stuff which has already been used for coating the wall. The composition of this intonaco is all-important, and I am perfectly convinced that the rapid



decay of our modern frescoes is due entirely to the bad quality of the intonaco.

The lime should be thoroughly slaked, so as to deprive it of its caustic properties, but it does not follow that it should be twenty or thirty years old. Lime can be kept in a slaked state and skimmed until it almost ceases to be lime at all, and this worn-out material is unfit for fresco. Then the sand should be gritty and hard to the touch. Clean river-sand collected in a granite country is very good; ground lava is used by modern Italian fresco-painters.

I do not know where the sand supplied to the fresco-painters of Westminster Palace came from, but it was a great deal too fine and soft to the touch.

The older and more worn-out the lime is, the sharper and more tenacious ought to be the sand.

Having got some well-slaked but not worn-out lime and some good hard sand, the mortar that is required for the day's use should be made fresh every day, or at least as often as twice a week.

When I was painting some frescoes at Islington, I got my intonaco from a man who had had great experience. Instead, however, of sending me the lime and sand separate, he sent me about twenty small barrels of ready-made mortar. My work took me nearly two years, and every morning my plasterer had to go with a pick-axe and hack a piece of dry mortar out of the barrels.

This he beat up with water and spread it for my day's work, smacking his lips as if he had got a most delicious compound on his trowel. I knew no better then, but now I am surprised, not that the frescoes should be decaying, but that the decay should not be more rapid. Improper colors and the omnipresent gas may have had something to do with the decay of all frescoes painted in London, but from experience I can assert with confidence that the main cause has been the weakness of the lime and sand.

We will suppose in our imaginary decoration that we don't fall into this mistake, that we get lime of the proper strength and clean granite sand. We will also suppose that we don't get a dozen barrels of mortar made up, but have our intonaco mixed fresh every other day.

The first thing to be painted is the sky or background, whatever it may be. We mark out on the wall with charcoal the extreme extent of this background. We don't trace the outline of the heads, but make our black mark well beyond where this outline should be.

The plasterer ought to be an early riser, so that by nine or ten o'clock when we arrive we may find the mortar all ready for us, even in surface, and tolerably firm or "set" as it is called.

I never could get an English plasterer to *throw* the mortar against the wall, as is done by Italian



and French workmen. When spoken to about it he always seemed to think he ought to know his own trade best, or perhaps the Union forbids him to make the mortar stick too close.

His way of smearing or buttering the wall answers pretty well on a very rough surface, but on smooth stone or tiles it would not do at all. In Italy it is not at all uncommon to see marble columns coated with frescoes more than four hundred years old. The intonaco in these cases is very thin, not above one eighth of an inch in thickness.

As a rule the thinner the intonaco the better it will stick.

We will suppose now that we have painted our flat background and finished our first day's work. We now get our pricked tracing, and holding it so as to fit the panel, we apply our charcoal bag to the outline of the heads. When we remove the tracing-paper we find a black dotted line which gives us the outline against the sky. With a knife or a sharp spatule we cut away the superfluous mortar. The cut should not be at right angles with the wall, or the outline will be sure to be injured next day when the fresh mortar is joined on to it.

It should be inclined at an angle of fifty or sixty degrees. I always make a point of doing this cutting job myself. The dotted line is sometimes indistinct, and I have to cast a glance at the cartoon. Where, therefore, there is any complication of out-

line or the least indistinctness, this operation ought to be done by the artist.

Before leaving, we make a charcoal mark as before, which will completely cover our next day's work and leave us a remnant to cut away. Our plasterer fits in the new mortar up to the charcoal mark the next morning, and so we proceed bit by bit as if we were putting together a puzzle, until the whole is completed.

It is hardly necessary to say that it is very desirable that each cutting should correspond with some natural division of the work. Thus, in painting a female head, we might paint the hair and diadem the first day, and go on with the face and neck the next, stopping at the necklace. In real fresco nothing can be retouched. Every day's work must be finished and complete in the minutest detail.

I will now say something about the colors and execution of fresco.

In fresco (as in distemper) the colors in drying become of a much lighter shade. It is, therefore, very desirable to have a piece of some very absorbent material at hand to try the tints on. There are two distinct modes of painting fresco. One is the solid body-color method, as practised by M. Angelo, Raffaele, and all the other masters of that period. The other is the thin water-color method.

If we adopt the first mode, we get a porcelain or

metal palette, and set the colors on it just as we do for oil-painting. Lime takes the place of white lead. The only yellow it is safe to use, at least in England, is raw sienna; probably, however, Mars yellow, which is derived from iron, might be used with safety. Light red of various kinds and burnt sienna are the principal reds. Oxide of chromium is the green. Raw and burnt umber are quite safe, as is also black. Blue is a very difficult color to manage in fresco.

It seems very antagonistic to lime, and it is almost impossible to paint a blue sky properly graduated. On the other hand, raw umber takes very kindly to fresco. Lakes and all vegetable colors are to be strictly avoided.

The brushes ought to be hog's hair tools, but long and soft, so as not to disturb the surface of the wet mortar.

Painting fresco in this opaque, solid method is a very similar process to oil-painting. It is best to begin with the shades and work up to the lights. no scumbling is practicable, but at the end of the day, when the surface is becoming too dry for solid painting, thin washes of color may be used with great advantage.

The Italian terra rossa, burnt sienna, raw sienna, and even vermilion, may be of great service for these light glazings.

It will take three or four days (and often more, if

the intonaco is thick and the weather cool) before the colors begin to lose their dark, wet tint.

The beginner must not be discouraged if the colors seem to be drying not as he intended. Some colors take a longer time than others, and it is well to have a little patience. The old masters generally retouched defective parts with what was called *fresco secco* (dry fresco), but which was simply some compound of white of egg, vinegar, and garlic ; but it is much better to cut the defective portions out, to have fresh intonaco laid on, and to repaint them. If once you begin to retouch, the whole work seems to require it, and you never know where to stop.

The second method of painting fresco is totally different. I very much prefer it, as the work is done more rapidly, and the colors hardly change at all in drying. Besides (as far as my experience goes), the result is more durable.

As soon as the fresh intonaco for the day's work is sufficiently set, you mix some lime with water very fluid, something like milk (good milk, I mean, and not milk and water).

You float this over the intonaco, and in about ten minutes you may give it a second coating of lime-water. This ought to smooth the surface, and remove any little grains of sand.

You now trace your outline as before with the tracing paper and the bag of charcoal. You have no palette, but half-a-dozen small tumblers.

Into one of these you put a small lump of raw umber and about the same quantity of oxide of chromium. You add water, and mix them well together. The result is of course a brownish olive green.* You pour half the mixture into another tumbler, and add water, thus getting a weaker solution of the same mixture. You repeat the process into a third tumbler, and get a still weaker tint.

With these three or more tints you begin to model your head, beginning with the dark parts and working up to the light. You must bear in mind that no rubbing out is possible; you cannot wash or sponge out as in water-color drawing.

You must therefore be very careful in approaching the light parts, and copy the cartoon as carefully as possible.

You continue thus to draw and model with your green color until the head looks like a finished drawing. This operation will take from two to four hours, according to the nature of the head.

You now take three clean tumblers and put a small lump of light red or terra rossa into one of them, add water, and mix as before; you make weaker solutions, just as you did with the green. If the head is that of an old man or a bronzed warrior, you ought to add raw sienna to the light red, but for

* The old masters used terra verte for this preparatory modelling; but modern terra verte will not withstand the action of the lime, so it is necessary to compound a substitute, and the above mixture answers very well.

ordinary complexions the light red is quite sufficient. You apply this flesh tint in washes with a very broad and soft brush, using the stronger solution for the lips and cheeks, the medium for the intermediate parts, and the weakest for the high lights. No modelling is required; the modelling has already been done, and this tinting is very soon accomplished.

You now take either burnt sienna pure, or burnt sienna and umber, and with a fine sable give strength and precision to the darkest parts, such as the nostrils, the division of the lips, the inside of the ears, etc. If a little black is necessary for the eyebrow or eyelashes, you now give these little finishing touches, and your head is complete.

You have not used one grain of lime or of any solid color; the wall is stained rather than painted, and you have none of those strange and capricious changes of color to fear which are so constantly occurring in the solid method, where lime is used freely as a pigment,

I have now gone through the whole process of fresco-painting as far as I know it. I shall conclude with a few general observations.

The fresco-painter ought to be of a nature capable of continued exertion. Whatever the work is, whether head, torso, or drapery, it must be finished in a day. He must not, on the plea of head-

ache or seediness, give himself a half-holiday. He may of course abstain from work for a whole day, or for a week if he likes, but those little snatches of rest, involving a game at lawn-tennis, a good lunch, or a look at the papers, to which many artists are rather partial, are denied him.

He is always working against time, and although this is trying at first, he soon gets accustomed to it.

Secondly, he must be a man of fixed purpose. He has got his cartoon and his colored-sketch, and he must turn a deaf ear to all suggestions of alterations when once these preliminaries are settled.

An alteration in the turn or size of a head, or a change in the action of a figure, are very easily carried out in an oil picture, but in a fresco it is a very serious matter to begin alterations.

Thirdly, he must not mind a bit what the workmen and people about the building think of him. I believe that the upper ten thousand (at least the æsthetically inclined amongst them) do not hold mural decoration in contempt, but the working class invariably take the fresco-painter in his blouse and on his scaffold to be one of their own fraternity.

If they were to see the same artist in a handsome studio painting somebody's portrait in a gilt frame, they would at once suppose he was a gentleman, but coloring a wall is a very ungentlemanly occupation.

When I was painting a large monochrome work at University Hall, there were some plumbers and glaziers employed in repairing gas-pipes and mending windows. One of them came down into the hall where I was at work, and began to look about for something amongst the pots and colors on my table. Apparently he did not find what he wanted, so he turned round and called to me, "I say, governor, you don't happen to have a bit of putty in your pocket?"

Fourthly and finally, the mural painter ought to be satisfied with moderate pay.

At the Tercentenary Rubens Festival celebrated at Antwerp, last year, an Art Congress was held, at which I assisted.

The principal question proposed for discussion was an eminently practical one. It was ; "How can monumental and decorative painting be best encouraged and revived at the present time?"

In answer to this practical question I gave what I thought a practical answer. After passing in review various difficulties with which modern artists had to contend, I summed up by saying that the real impediment to the development of mural painting was its enormous cost, and I pointed out that it was only by the artist accepting very moderate pay, and having at his command a staff of efficient pupils who would be willing to work under him for little or no remuneration, that such works as were executed in

the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries could again become common. I said a good deal respecting the costliness of large mural paintings done by modern artists of any repute, and on the other hand gave examples of modern work, which, with the help of efficient assistants, had been done not only well but at a moderate cost.

At the conclusion of my paper, up jumped a gifted orator, who knew no more about painting than a cobbler, and in a torrent of eloquence swept away the few grains of common-sense I had ventured to import into the congress.

It was a sacrilege (according to him) to profane the temple of high art with a dirty question of pounds, shillings, and pence.

Art was a subtle essence, a delicate perfume. Art was a religion. Art appealed to all our higher sympathies, and it was only by educating people up to a kind of art-millennium pitch that we could hope to see our public buildings decorated with historical paintings. He sat down and mopped himself amidst loud applause, and I felt considerably humiliated. We had a great deal more of this sort of thing at the congress. The few artists who were present sat dumb, and the high æsthetic gentlemen had it all their own way, so that the congress, which might have served some practical end, finished in vapor and smoke.

In spite, however, of this termination of the discussion, I am still convinced that until mural painters

have sufficient love for their art to accept a small remuneration, decorative work of a high class will languish.

For the mural painter's work, Manchester millionaires do not vie with each other. No spirited and enterprising dealers beset his studio, eager to secure whatever he has on the easel. All of what Dr. Johnson called the "Potentiality of becoming rich beyond the dreams of avarice" is denied him. Pay of course he must have, but his patrons are generally committees or corporate bodies of some kind, who seldom give fancy prices.

Let him therefore console himself with the thought that his is the highest and noblest branch of the profession, and that whilst high-priced easel pictures are relegated to private galleries and dining-rooms, only to reappear at intervals at Christie's salerooms, *his* work is a fixture, and can always be seen by the public.

With the hope that it may be admired as well as seen I shall conclude my lecture.



LECTURE IX.

ON FINISH.

It has always been a disputed point, both amongst artists and writers on art, how near an approach to absolute truth is desirable in painting ; some insisting on photographic accuracy, whilst others go to the opposite extreme, and consider mere suggestiveness to be the great desideratum in painting.

Much may be argued in favor of both sides of the question, but a medium course is certainly the best.

Imitation of nature is no doubt the foundation-stone of all sound painting, and the natural inference would be, that the closer the imitation the better the picture. But, on the other hand, a picture which is not an exact counterpart of the object portrayed, but leaves something to be imagined, is generally more interesting than a more perfect copy would be.

This fact is particularly noticeable in pictures of flowers, fruit, and still life generally.

A picture which at a little distance gives thoroughly the character of the fish, game, or flowers it is intended to represent, will be much more masterly and artistic if the scales of the fish, the feathers of

the birds, and the petals of the flowers are not individually studied with microscopic care, but treated in a broad, suggestive manner.

In a painting so handled the loss of a few minute details is more than compensated by greater freshness of color; and the charm inseparable from a rapid and dexterous execution.

If it were possible to combine the two qualities, if we could get breadth and brilliancy united with minute finish, it would even then be doubtful whether the picture would be any the better for the additional pains bestowed upon it.

In looking at pictures, we require to be deceived only up to a certain point, and the whole question depends on where to fix that point. In to-night's lecture I intend to investigate this subject, and to extend my remarks to other kindred questions connected with the finish of a work of art.

All writers and lecturers on art are pretty well agreed that excessive finish is undesirable. I mean such finish as one sees in Bellini's portrait of the Doge, where each individual hair is painted, and where every wrinkle or pimple is studied as though it were of the utmost importance.

There is, however, a kind of finish of an infinitely more objectionable kind than Bellini's.

If Bellini elaborated small details to an extensive extent, they were at any rate thoroughly and honestly studied. His minute, delicate work always had

a laudable object, whether it were the exact rendering of a stray hair or the microscopic modelling of the wrinkles about the eyes. But the finisher of whom I am now speaking has no object, beyond smoothness.

Bad proportions and gross errors in drawing are nothing to him provided he gets a smooth, uniform surface. Like the old-fashioned provincial drawing-master, who taught oils, water-colors, and Poonah painting, smoothness and finish are with him synonymous terms.

Probably most of you are happily ignorant of the lost art of Poonah painting and drawing, and I certainly do not mean to waste our time in describing it. It will be sufficient to say that the process was almost entirely mechanical, and that the results exhibited the maximum of smoothness combined with the minimum of art.

It used often to be taught in young ladies' schools. It would be both invidious and unjust to compare the work of any Academy student with these inane productions, but I wish to warn you, as I have often warned you before, against confounding "finishing" with mere polishing.

Intelligent finishing consists in correcting small faults of detail, in revising the relative values of the shades and half-tones, in giving definite form to the fingers and toes, or any portion of the figure which may have been neglected. Unintelligent finishing,

or what I call polishing, consists in getting a nice even grain for all the modelling of the figure. This polishing process may not in itself be objectionable, but it becomes objectionable when it interferes (as it too often does) with necessary alterations and modifications.

You probably all know that I am no advocate of *sketching* in the schools. However much I may admire the nude studies of the great masters, I do not wish to see the same kind of work attempted by the students. I am decidedly for "finish," "*high finish*" even, but by the term *I* mean accuracy of drawing and modelling, and not neatness or evenness of execution.

To return to the Doge's portrait, which I have taken as a thoroughly good specimen of minute finishing.

It is perfectly true that if you go close up to it and examine it with a lens, you will find it much more like nature than would be a head by Titian or Rembrandt if subjected to the same microscopic investigation ; but pictures are not meant to be microscopic objects any more than human beings.

If in some foreign town I meet unexpectedly my old friend Smith, I should probably recognize him some fifty yards off. I should say : " That must be Smith, it is so like his figure and general appearance." As I approach him I begin to distinguish his features, and I become more and more certain, until finally I grasp his hand and all doubt as to his iden-



tity vanishes. It is Smith all over, and, as I remark, not a bit changed since I last saw him.

I do not pull out a pocket lens and count the number of gray hairs in his whiskers, or the small warts about his eyes.

It appears to me that a life-size portrait should be treated in the same way. Viewed from the end of the gallery, it should resemble the person it represents, and the likeness should become more and more striking the nearer we approach, until we get within a very short distance.

If we approach still nearer, the brush-work of the artist begins to appear, and finally, if we examine the features with a lens, we can discover but very little left of the resemblance which was so striking at a reasonable distance.

The whole question is, What *is* a reasonable distance? In portraits by the minute finishers, the point at which the work looks its best is evidently too near, and I think that in a good deal of modern painting it is too far off.

A life-size head should look its best at from about six to ten feet distance. Nearer than six feet the impasto and brush touches of the painter would be too apparent, and beyond ten feet the delicate modeling of details would begin to be lost.

Artists and the art-loving portion of the public delight no doubt in going close up to a fine Titian, Rembrandt, or Vandyck, but this is to see how the

marvellously life-like effect has been produced (to learn a lesson in short), but not to view the work from the most favorable standpoint. I think it will be found that, generally speaking, the old masterpieces of portraiture are best seen within the distances I have mentioned.

There are, no doubt, exceptions. Thus the portraits of Holbein gain by being studied closely, and those of Velasquez are best appreciated at a considerable distance, whilst the figures of Van der Helst are so admirably painted that they will bear a very close scrutiny as well as a distant view.

If an artist has the precision of a Holbein or the consummate execution of a Van der Helst, there is no harm in his following finish in portraiture almost to its extreme limit ; but if not, he had better rest and be satisfied with less literal work.

In spite of a few honorable exceptions, the tendency of modern artists is, however, not toward the finish of Holbein, but rather in the opposite direction.

No one can walk through a Paris exhibition without being struck by the enormous amount of sketchy, imperfect work ; the best specimens of which have, at a great distance, a look, a reminiscence of nature, but when viewed nearer, resolve themselves into smears of paint, generally plastered on with the knife.

Now it is this kind of work which is so attractive

to the modern connoisseur. The peasant, the workman, the soldier pass it by with a laugh, or sometimes with an expression of bewilderment. The cultured artist shrugs his shoulders, but tries to view it leniently, as he would the work of a savage ; but the *dilettanti* and those who have a smattering of art-knowledge delight in it. It flatters their vanity to supplement out of their inner consciousness the artist's short-comings.

These pictures get talked about in the salons and praised in the newspapers, whilst good, honest, sober work is comparatively ignored. Public taste having thus declared itself, it is not surprising that an ever-increasing crop of these young "impressionists" should be forthcoming to minister unto it.

There is another kind of departure from truth in connection with finish, which is, I think, almost as much to be deprecated. I mean where the heads are painted in a different style to the rest of the picture.

If we go back to the old masters, we shall never find this fault. Examine any of their works. Recall to mind the Raffaelles, the Titians, the Correggios, or the Poussins of the National Gallery, and observe that the draperies, accessories, and backgrounds are all in keeping with the heads. If, as in Perugino's and Raffaele's early works, the painting of the flesh is delicate and smooth, though dry and hard, you will find the same qualities and defects in the whole picture.

If, on the other hand, as in Titian and Paul Veronese, the flesh-painting is rich and free, the draperies will be equally so. Take Rubens, again; how homogeneous is *his* work! Let us suppose that a picture by this master were unexpectedly discovered, and that by some accident all the flesh-painting in it had been destroyed, would any one hesitate, on inspection of what remained, in attributing it to Rubens? Would not the good and bad qualities of the master be apparent in every part?

As the opposite extreme to the slapdash Rubens, take the careful Gerard Dow, and observe how the delicate and minute finish of the heads is carried out into every detail of his pictures. If we examine any genuine work of Rembrandt or of David Teniers, we shall always find the same homogeneous qualities. The heads may (as is often the case in Rembrandt) be more carefully painted than the unimportant parts of the picture; or contrariwise, as in David Teniers, we may sometimes find a stoneware flagon more elaborated than the hand of the boor who is holding it, but we recognize everywhere the touch of the master.

I know of no example amongst the old masters where the kind of disparity in style which I am deprecating is observable.

In certain modern pictures, however, this homogeneous quality in painting is sadly wanting. In the so-called Spanish school (by which I mean the school

of Fortuny), the background, draperies, and accessories are painted with a crisp dexterity which is quite marvellous, whilst the heads are labored like colored photographs.

The contrast is sometimes so great that it is difficult to believe that the picture is not the work of two artists. This fault has become apparent in certain pictures of the Austrian school; but the contagion does not appear to have extended to us, at least not to our oil-painters.

I have, however, noticed a tendency amongst a few of our water-color figure-painters toward this singular modern peculiarity.

The difficulties of giving color, form, and expression to a head, and at the same time preserving a free style of painting, are no doubt much greater in water-color than in oil, but I think it so desirable that a work should be homogeneous that I would sacrifice a good deal in the way of finish and even of expression in the faces, to obtain that quality.

If a man has great versatility with his brush and wishes to display it, let him paint one picture in the style of Holbein or Memling, and another in the style of Velasquez, but he should not in the same picture (and *à fortiori* in the same figure) attempt to unite two dissimilar styles of painting.

One of the principal difficulties young artists have to encounter in finishing a figure-picture is the management of their drapery.

If they are painstaking and make an intelligent use of their models they will succeed with their heads, hands, and all their flesh-painting ; or if they do not succeed, the way to success is so obvious that I need say but little about it.

I assume that our young artist has gone through a course of study, and is able to paint a nude figure or a head from nature tolerably correctly. His difficulty will be, not in copying his models, but in making use of them without copying them.

He should form an ideal in his mind of the personage he means to represent, and take care to select either from professional models or from his friends those who approach nearest to this ideal. He will probably have to make use of casts. The small heads of the warriors on the Trajan Column are admirable in character and very suggestive. Casts from the mediæval heads of Pisano, Donatello, and Luca della Robbia are also very useful.

All these and other means toward his end will suggest themselves to him, but his course is not so clear when he comes to tackle his draperies.

Every student must be aware that draperies adjusted on the lay figure and carefully copied, have always an unnatural and trivial look about them. The form underneath, if expressed at all, is the form of the lay figure, and not that of nature. It will not do therefore in a picture to adjust the drapery on a lay figure and copy the result.



This *may* be done with advantage for those folds which hang altogether independent of the figure, but for all those which are in the slightest degree connected with the form underneath, some other method must be adopted.

No doubt the best method of all (were it possible) would be to dress up the living model and paint direct on to the picture, but this is seldom practicable.

Long before the artist has had time to study the folds, the model moves, and all has to be done over again.

If an artist has great experience with drapery, and the attitude is a very easy one, he may make a charcoal study which will serve him for the picture without having subsequently to readjust his drapery on the lay figure, but no young hand would be able to do this in a satisfactory way. He must go more systematically to work. He must first get a characteristic study of the nude figure. I mean such a study as the old masters used to make, giving the exact attitude and the form of the salient parts. He must then make a replica in charcoal of this study and adjust the drapery on his living model. On this replica he will now, as far as he can, reproduce the arrangement of the folds he has before him. There are plenty of studies by Raffaele and the old masters which explain better than words can, the process I am trying to describe

He has now two working drawings to guide him,

viz., his original nude study, and the study from the draped model. Having thus as it were laid his foundations, he may drape his lay figure and paint direct from it on to his picture, taking care (as he proceeds) to correct the form from his preliminary studies. He will thus be doing sound, honest work, and, even if dissatisfied with his finished drapery, he has always his studies to fall back upon.

Some artists, especially French and Italians, make a great use of photography, and, if kept within bounds, I see no objection whatever to the practice. It would hardly be legitimate art to dress up and pose a number of models and have them photographed with the intention of transferring the group to canvas, but it is perfectly allowable to call in the aid of photography for draperies or costumes, where, from the action of the figures, it would be impracticable to draw the folds from nature.

All portrait-painters know that it is not easy to get ladies and gentlemen to sit for their clothes, and it is far better to get help from a good photograph than from a model or a lay figure whom the clothes do not fit. I have no doubt that if photography had been known in the time of Raffaello he would have largely availed himself of it. He often copied whole figures from his predecessors, and this is certainly more reprehensible.

I now approach the vexed question as to how far the draperies, background, and accessory parts of a



picture should be finished without detracting from the heads.

Most of you will doubtless recollect the passage in Sir Joshua's discourses where, speaking of drapery, he says : " It is the inferior style that marks the variety of stuffs. With the historical painter the clothing is neither woollen, nor linen, nor silk, nor satin nor velvet : it is drapery, nothing more."

I would fain believe that Sir Joshua meant to say that it was beneath the dignity of high art to trouble itself with surface texture, in which case I should certainly agree with him ; but I am afraid this is hardly what he *did* mean. However that may be, it is certainly not the inferior style which by intelligent arrangement and careful study of the folds expresses the nature and quality of the various stuffs. How is it possible (using Sir Joshua's own words) to " dispose the drapery with the nicest judgment, and to copy it carefully," without clearly expressing the material out of which it is made ?

Satin and velvet are very seldom wanted in pictures of subjects taken from the Bible, ancient history, or mythology. The figures should be clothed in woollen or linen stuffs, and without descending to minute imitation of texture, the nature of these garments should be clearly expressed.

If in Raffaele's frescoes, and in the works of the Roman school generally, we are in doubt as to whether the draperies are meant for wool, linen, or



silk, it is because their folds were *not* "studied with the greatest care," and often *not* "disposed with the nicest judgment." In many of Raffaello's works, and particularly in those of Giulio Romano, we feel that the draperies are wholly imaginary, and hence the vague uncertainty as to the material.

This uncertainty, instead of being a quality to be imitated, appears to me as a blemish to be avoided.

In the highest style of landscape-painting, again, although it would doubtless be absurd for the artist to elaborate his foliage leaf by leaf, yet there would be nothing beneath the dignity of his art in faithfully giving the general characteristics of the oak, the beech, the ash, the bay, and the olive, so that each species should be distinctly recognized in the picture.

I am quite aware that in many classical landscapes by Poussin and the old masters, it is difficult to specify the kind of trees they contain, but the botanical uncertainty in which we are left, instead of enhancing the merit of the work, rather lessens it.

I remember going through an Italian gallery with a mixed company, and coming upon a magnificent Titianesque landscape.

This arrested the attention of all the party, and was greatly admired, until some botanical Philistine asked what kind of trees the artist had meant to represent. We none of us could tell; I thought they were evergreen oaks, another said they were elms, a third apple-trees, and so on; but we were all in doubt.



"Well," says the questioner, "it cannot be much of a picture if the trees are done so badly that no one can tell what they are."

Our Philistine was no doubt wrong, but, at the same time, the work would have been all the better, and would have lost none of its imposing grandeur if the specific characters of the trees had been given with greater care.

I am glad to note that almost all modern landscape-painters are fully alive to the fact that a tree is not merely a tree, but a particular species of tree, and that the species can be thoroughly indicated without in any way lessening the grand character of the work.

To return to draperies and costumes.

The artists of the Byzantine and Romanesque periods used to paint their heads of a conventional and very ugly type, without any attempt at individuality, and bestow all their care on the draperies, nimbi, and accessory parts, often enriching their work with real jewels.

This fashion, which was rampant in the Byzantine period, began to wane in the fourteenth century, but lingered on almost till Leonardo da Vinci's time.

During what may be called the golden age of art (that is, from Leonardo's time down to Poussin's) the proper balance of finish between flesh and drapery seems to have been well observed, but in the last century (especially in this country) the art-

ists of the time reversed the practice of the old Byzantine painters ; that is, they painted the heads of the sitters as well as they could, and left the dress and accessories to be put in by their assistants.

Bad as the flesh-painting was, the treatment of the dress was still more slovenly and inartistic. The apologists for this style of work say that the head is every thing in a portrait, and that no one cares about the dress and background, but this was certainly not the opinion of the old masters. To take a familiar example. Is not the head of Gavartius greatly improved by the exquisitely-painted frill which surrounds it? Or, again, is not the life-like flesh in Bordoni's female portrait rendered still more life-like by the gorgeous color and masterly execution of the crimson dress?

Our National Gallery teems with examples of the same kind, where judicious finish of the accessory parts assists rather than mars the effect of the flesh-painting.

I do not wish to be understood as insisting that in all cases the dress and background should be as much finished as the heads, but there is a great difference between unfinished work and bad work, and it is this difference which the advocates for neglecting accessories seem unable to understand. I do not find fault with a certain charming unfinished portrait group by Rubens in the Louvre, because the accessory parts are merely indicated, but I *should* find



fault with it if they were clumsily and inartistically painted. The kind of work I am protesting against is that which is often noticeable in portraits of the Gainsborough and Lawrence schools, where the shoulders and hands are quite shapeless, and the folds of the dress utterly impossible.

It is very refreshing to me to emerge from a gallery containing pictures of this class, and to enter one devoted to pictures of the Dutch school. I feel as if I had reached *terra firma* after floundering about in a quagmire. We never find a want of intelligent and careful drawing in the hands and dresses of portraits by Rembrandt, Van der Helst, Franz Hals, Terburg, and all the other masters of the school.

It may be objected that I am deprecating a fault which no longer exists, that my expressions of antipathy to a slovenly treatment of the accessory parts of a picture are out of date, and that the commonplace, simpering full-lengths of fifty years ago, with their impossible shoulders and badly-drawn hands, are no longer seen in an Academy exhibition. I am quite willing to grant this, but it does not follow that because this pseudo-Lawrence sort of work is no longer seen on the walls of the Academy, that therefore it is defunct.

There is a large and ever-increasing class of young artists who are treading in the footsteps of the old masters, who grudge no time and spare no pains in the study of their hands, costumes, and every

thing which will give finish and completeness to their work ; but, on the other hand, there are still many who, to save themselves trouble, and perhaps misled by the present extraordinary popularity of Gainsborough, are satisfied with the most careless and weak treatment of all accessories in their pictures.

That these pictures are not often seen on the Academy walls is due to the rejecting power of the Council, and not to the non-existence of their authors.

Having thus, I trust, given you to understand that by the word "finish" I mean something quite different from mere smoothness or polish, I will now give you a few hints as to how the work of finishing a picture is to be accomplished.

It was the habit of Horace Vernet to make a very rough pen-and-ink sketch for his elaborate battle-pieces. He would then, without further preamble, have his models, and paint direct from them on to the blank canvas, finishing every thing as he went on.

When the whole canvas was covered, the picture was finished.

I remember, on one occasion, he painted a most gorgeous Arab saddle, holsters, stirrups, and all, and several weeks afterward painted the horse which bore it.

Cocked-hats, kepis, etc., he would knock off by



the dozen, and then, when he could get his trooper models, he would paint the wearers. He was always, in the matter of finish, putting the cart before the horse. I don't think that he did this intentionally, but he was of an impatient nature, and could not bear to sit idle, waiting for his sitters.

He was not a great colorist, like his contemporary Delacroix, nor a great draughtsman, like Flandrin, but his pictures have a manly, business-like look about them, and a homogeneous quality which is perfectly marvellous, considering the heterodox way in which they were put together.

No living artist, and probably none that ever lived, could have taken such liberties with his *modus operandi* without the most disastrous results; and I feel sure that no one present here to-night would think of painting a figure-picture in this haphazard fashion.

Supposing the subject of the picture to be the time-honored one of "King John Signing Magna Charta."

Instead of (like Vernet) beginning by painting a mediæval inkstand, and then perhaps doing a bit of tapestry background, proceeding onward toward the figures, the proper process would be to get the figures done first, and finish with the accessory parts.

I will assume, therefore, that this has been done, that the composition of the groups has been thor-



oughly studied, that a colored sketch has been made, and that each individual figure has been carefully studied from nature. The picture, however, after all this work, would probably be far from finished.

The general effect would have to be revised ; certain portions which had cost hours, and even days of labor, would have to be sacrificed ; other important parts, such as heads and hands, to be altered. Finally, the general scheme of color, which was pleasing enough in the sketch, but had somehow deteriorated in the picture, would have to be attended to.

A conscientious artist has often great difficulty in knowing *when* his picture may be called finished.

Some men will carry their striving after perfection too far, and waste their time over really trivial details, or, like Penelope, be always undoing their previous day's work. This is, no doubt, better than being too easily satisfied, but these vacillating artists should recollect that alterations are not always improvements.

On the whole, I think it may be safely said, that when the artist has fully carried out on the larger scale the intentions of his sketch, his work may be said to be done.

By the word "fully" I mean that each figure should be executed in such a way as to give force and pathos to his version of the subject. In the de-



signing of hands, for instance, there are fifty ways (to return to our King John) of holding a pen. He should not hold it as if he were writing "Yours truly"; he should betray unwillingness mixed with fear both in his face and his hands.

The burly barons, again, should not appear to be inviting their monarch to kindly sign his name. Their hands ought to express a resolve that he *should* sign it, and in their muscular knotty fingers should be indicated a foreshadowing of the consequences if he refused.

Attention to all these points is what constitutes "finish" rather than the elaboration of detail.

My master, Paul Delaroche, was a great adept at this dramatic completeness; indeed, it was this quality alone which earned him his reputation. His drawing was sound and correct, but nothing more; his color was generally inky and cold, but the dramatic force and truthfulness of his figures were quite enough to insure him a very high place amongst the artists of the nineteenth century.

When he was painting his well-known "Napoleon after Waterloo," he wanted a pair of muddy boots. Some artists would have thought the mud-splashes of no importance whatever, and would have daubed them in at random; others, more careful, would have made their model put the boots on, and sent him for a walk in the muddy streets; but Delaroche, reflecting that boots are differently splashed

after riding to what they are after walking, hired a horse, and got one of his pupils to don the jack-boots, and take a good gallop across the plain St. Denis. The boots were splashed to perfection, and it did not take the master long to do them full justice.

Intelligent brain-work is of a higher order of excellence, and contributes more largely toward the completion of a work of art than mere execution. I am far from underrating executive skill, but the term is rather an elastic one, and generally includes good drawing and good color as well. Taken in its restricted sense, as meaning merely brilliant manual dexterity, I hold it to be of but little value. Of course a certain amount of dexterity is necessary, otherwise a fine sense of form could not be adequately expressed. If Leonardo and Raffaele had not possessed considerable manipulative skill, they could not have produced a "Last Supper" and a "Madonna de S. Sisto." Where would Holbein have been if he had not had great precision of touch as well as the keenest perception of form? Every painter should have sufficient power in his hand to give expression to what he feels, but this is not the kind of manual dexterity to which I have said I attach little importance. I mean the showy, impudent kind of work of which there are always numerous examples in foreign exhibitions—the kind of work which is too common amongst modern Italian



painters, and which seems to be rampant in the Austrian capital.

To return to my subject, namely, the finishing of a picture. I would advise all young artists to beware of making alterations either in the composition or in the scheme of color of their pictures, when they are in an advanced state. A very slight change often brings in its wake many others, and gets the whole work into a muddle. Observations about incorrect drawing or faulty proportions are always valuable, as these imperfections can be remedied without disturbing the rest of the picture, but beware of suggestions which may in any way affect the general scheme of coloring.

Thus, if it is suggested to you that a certain mass of white drapery would be better dark, and you happen to agree with the suggestion, do not be in a hurry to carry out the change. Try the effect with charcoal or water-color first, and if the result does not please you, no harm has been done. Even if it *does* please you, you should make a large allowance for the charm of novelty. You have had your picture before your eyes for a long time, and the change may be agreeable to you at first sight; and yet, if you carry it out, you may repent. Of course, if you do not agree with the suggestion, dismiss it from your minds.

The man who listens to every piece of advice that is given him will never finish his work. You prob-



ably all know the story of the artist with many candid friends, who got so bewildered by their criticisms that he provided a large piece of chalk and requested each of them to mark the part he desired altered. By the end of the day the surface of the picture was like a section of a chalk-pit.

A long experience has taught me that nothing ought to be left undone in the hope of retouching the picture on the so-called varnishing days. Such anticipations are almost always illusory; and it does not matter whether you have one or three days for retouching.

It often happens that one would like to have the picture home again and repaint it, but the few changes one has time to make during the purgatorial varnishing time are so trifling, that, except to the artist himself, they do not affect the general appearance of the picture, and they often interfere considerably with the rubbing-in of medium or some temporary varnish, which is generally indispensable for the exhibition of pictures painted with the ordinary materials.

As the professorship of sculpture is still vacant, I am not trespassing on any one's ground if I say a word or two about finish in sculpture.

In this art, even more than in painting, excessive smoothness is too often mistaken for high finish.

The sculptors of the female figure especially, are too prone to efface (even in the clay) details which



ought to be carefully preserved; and after the figure has been cast in plaster, the work of polishing goes on with file and sand-paper, until the few touches of nature which had been left are effaced.

The great mischief, however, is usually done when the plaster is copied into marble. The paid statuary who does this work strives to give still greater roundness to the already smooth and rounded limbs, and he generally succeeds too well. When the marble is ready for the finishing-touches of the sculptor, he sometimes endeavors to regain a little of the natural element, but generally he consoles himself with the reflection that high art is incompatible with detail, and so his Venus or nymph leaves his studio for the exhibition or the patron's gallery, there to be admired as a model of beautiful carving and of exquisite taste; of the former, on account of its soft, boneless appearance; and of the latter, because, though a nude figure, there is no reminiscence of nature about it.

There is less of this kind of insipid sculpture now than formerly.

Terra cotta, which, as every one knows, is the direct impression of the artist's modelling, has to a great extent supplanted marble, and the smooth pseudo-classical nymphs of forty years ago are rather out of favor.

French sculptors of the nude have, in their horror of smoothness, gone into the opposite ex-



treme ; and, thinking to give more realism to their work, have adopted a coarse granular style of modelling for their surface texture. I question, however, whether this new fashion at all meets the objection every artist must entertain toward the old style of work.

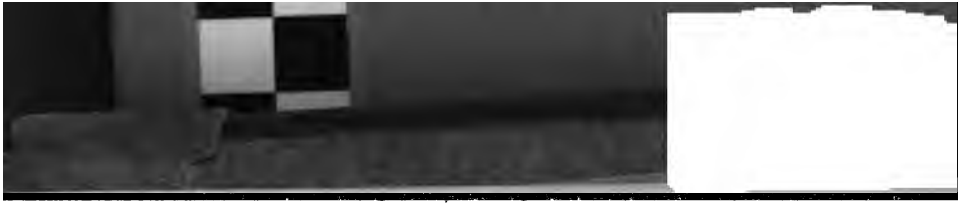
Even supposing we grant that, in nature, the skin is of a granular hummocky texture, such as we see in the plaster statues by Carpeaux and his school, I cannot allow that any thing is gained by this piece of realism.

Carpeaux himself was a man of genius, and in *his* work, nature (though not of a very beautiful kind) is apparent everywhere ; but his imitators, like most imitators, copy his eccentricities rather than his good qualities.

The real objection to the work of the Canova school of sculpture is not that the surface is unlike the human skin, but that unintelligent carving and excessive polishing tend to obliterate all character and individuality of form.

This objection can only be met by sculptors aiming at a more discriminating perception of form, as well as what (from want of a better word) I may call a more conservative style of execution.

The excellence of the masterpieces of antiquity does not lie either in their smoothness or in their surface texture, but in the beauty of their proportions, and in the thorough though never obtrusive



knowledge of anatomy displayed in the modelling of every part.

These qualities, in sculpture as well as in drawing, are what constitute "finish," and not mere surface polishing on the one hand, or on the other a coarse imitation of the cellular tissue of the skin.



LECTURE X.

ON THE CHOICE OF A SUBJECT.

BEFORE beginning to treat of the composition of a picture, I should like to make some remarks on the choice of a subject. Of course, no rule can be laid down in this matter. What strikes one artist as being a very good subject will appear totally uninteresting to another. It is, perhaps, fortunate that this should be so. The taste of the general public is at least as varied as that of the profession, and thus every one can be suited. I remember an old gentleman who has now been dead many years, but who in his day was a great patron of artists, telling me that he preferred pictures with little or no subject in them. He liked what he called nice "satiny" bits of painting, and the less story there was in them to distract his attention from the "satiny" painting the better. I fancy that this want of appreciation of composition is more common than is generally supposed. For one person who notices the skill shown in the general arrangement of a picture, fifty will be found to admire its color and execution.

Now I do not wish in any way to depreciate the charm of harmonious color and brilliant execution.

Of all qualities in painting they are, perhaps, the most captivating ; but they are not the alpha and omega of art. I purpose, therefore, to devote several lectures to the study of composition, and acting in conformity with the precept about "first catching your hare before you proceed to cook it," we will this evening review the various kinds of subjects generally chosen by artists.

In my lecture on the International Exhibition, I mentioned with disapproval a certain class of subjects much affected by the modern French school. The artists seem to have ransacked history for every incident that was most loathsome and horrible. I am not at all squeamish, and should not object to blood and torture occasionally, but it is the morbid treatment of these ghastly subjects and their frequency which are offensive.

Perhaps it is hardly necessary to caution English students against painting death and putrefaction. They generally have a laudable desire to sell their pictures, and this desire would naturally tend to keep their subjects sweet. Some letters on the dismal tendency of modern British art appeared in the *Times* last autumn, and certainly I am not prepared to say that the writers were wholly in the wrong.

But if they had had an opportunity of comparing our school with the French, I think the letters would not have been written. Why, our deathbed scenes, funerals, etc., are positively cheerful, compared with

the sensational pictures of a French exhibition. No ; whatever the faults of English pictures may be, I don't think the subjects can be called dismal.

On the contrary, I should say, speaking generally, that they are too frivolous. Pictures are continually being painted which have little or no subject. The costumes of the period are pretty, the mild incident depicted happened, or might have happened, and these are quite sufficient reasons to many young artists for painting the picture.

I am far from saying that such a picture must be a bad one. It may be, and often is, charming in color, arrangement, and execution.

Indeed, the better the painting, the more one regrets that so much good work should be spent on so trivial an incident.

Before proceeding to what I have to say about the choice of a subject, I would impress upon you that I only profess to give you my own opinions.

If any student or young artist has a great fancy for a certain subject, the probability is that he will treat it better than he would one less congenial to him, and I should be very sorry to dissuade him from it. Indeed, I should be much pleased to find that he had a subject at all. If there is a rock ahead for the English school, it is a tendency to shirk the difficulties of composition.

Pictures representing single figures (mere models dressed up as men-at-arms, milk-maids, or Highland

lassies) are much commoner now than they used to be. Of course, in the minor exhibitions of London one expects to find plenty of work of this class, but the preponderance of these subjectless figure-pictures is becoming very marked even at the Academy; and as lecturer on painting, I should be neglecting my duty if I failed to notice it. It may be that these pictures pay, but art is not a trade; and even from a commercial point of view, I would suggest that there is such a thing as over-stocking the market.

The whole domain of history, both sacred and profane, is open to the artist, besides which there are innumerable subjects which are not strictly historical, but are suggested by history. Finally, to those who prefer illustrating the poets, there are Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and a whole host of more modern writers. Surely in such a vast quarry it cannot be difficult to dig out good subjects suitable to every mind. Many subjects are too hastily rejected because they have already been painted; when probably a new reading is very possible, or by slightly altering the moment chosen, the subject assumes another aspect.

In a former lecture I mentioned, as a familiar instance, the parable of the good Samaritan. Here is a trite and hackneyed subject enough. Every one has painted it, and yet it would be very possible, by altering the moment depicted, to give a new version of it.

Take the moment when the good Samaritan intrusts the wounded traveller to the care of the innkeeper, and leaves him money, adding that whatever more he may spend will be repaid him ; and you have a capital subject, which has never, to my knowledge, been painted. Again, imagine the return of the Samaritan after a few days' absence, and the gratitude of the injured man, now nearly restored to health, and you have another first-rate subject.

As an extreme example, take the " Holy Family." How often has this subject been painted ! Raffaele alone painted it over thirty times, and I should think that there are at least a thousand original Holy Families in existence ; and yet the subject seems to me as fresh as ever. The reason of this is, because it embodies the purest form of maternal love in the same way that the good Samaritan illustrates human kindness.

Maternal love and humanity are many-sided, and hence the subjects which illustrate them will be many-sided too.

Some artists shrink from taking known subjects from a laudable modesty. They could not think of entering into rivalry with Raffaele or André del Sarto.

I deem this modesty unnecessary, provided they bestow on their work original thought and invention.

If they attempt to rival the *manner* of the great masters, then they may be taxed with presumption, but no artist need be deterred from painting such subjects as the "Last Supper," or the "Walk to Emmaus," because many great masters have treated the same themes. I have probably said enough in defence of taking subjects which have already been painted, and will now attempt some classification of subjects suitable for the higher class of figure-pictures.

The term "Religious," in connection with art, ought, I think, to be confined to those subjects in which Divine personages are introduced, or to those which embody some miracle. Thus "The Creation of Adam," "The Holy Family," "The Raising of Lazarus," or "The Conversion of St. Paul," would all come under the head of religious subjects; but I think the term misapplied when speaking of such subjects as "Hagar in the Desert," "The Finding of Moses," "Samson and Delilah," etc., which have no religious element in them, although they are of course strictly Scriptural.

It is almost needless for me to remark that the Old and New Testament offer an inexhaustible field for pictorial illustration. The Bible is more read and better known than any other book in the world, and this alone would preëminently distinguish it as a source whence artists should derive subjects for their pictures; but besides this, the costumes from Noah

down to St. Paul are simple and dignified, suggesting the highest style of art.

There are reasons which militate against young artists (or old ones either) attempting this highest class of religious subjects, the principal of which is the fear of failure ; failure in this class being a much greater humiliation than in a lower walk of art. But there is also another good reason, and that is, the want of a market for their work.

Our churches do not, as a rule, purchase Biblical pictures, and our lay patrons of art naturally enough object to importing a "Crucifixion" or a "Noli me Tangere" into galleries and rooms full of mundane-subject pictures.

There seems, however, no reason why the second class of Scriptural subjects (those, I mean, which are simply historical or anecdotic) should not be more often painted than they are.

Of allegory and allegorical subjects I need hardly say any thing. For mere decorative purposes they may sometimes be eligible, but even then I think them quite out of date, and should be sorry to see a revival of the painted riddles which were so much the fashion in the time of Giotto and his followers.

Such semi-allegorical subjects as Reynolds' "Gar-ric between Tragedy and Comedy" are permissible enough, because they are easily comprehended ; but the allegories I object to are those which are totally incomprehensible without a page or two of letter-press to explain their meaning.

Mythology offers a much better field than allegory for decorative purposes. "Juno in her Peacock-drawn Car Ascending to Olympus," "Orpheus and Eurydice," "Prometheus Vincetus," etc., etc., are all splendid subjects.

There is a *bourgeois* objection to them on the ground that nobody now cares for Juno or any of the heathen gods and demi-gods ; but I should like to ask these objectors if they think that any one cares now for the "Vicar of Wakefield" and his family, or for "Tom Jones" and his Sophia, and yet pictures illustrative of these old-fashioned novels are painted every day, and often meet with great success.

It is quite a mistake to suppose that in order to admire or appreciate pictures we *must* take a lively interest in the biography of the *dramatis personæ*. Jove, Mars, Venus, and Hercules are of interest to us *now*, just as they probably were to the Athenians in the time of Phidias and Praxiteles, namely, as representatives of power, courage, beauty, and strength ; and so long as these qualities are valued by the human race, so long will their personifications continue to be interesting.

Historical subjects may be divided into two classes :—

1. Those where the interest is solely derived from the rank or historical importance of the personages depicted.

2. Those which, from their nature, are dramatically interesting, independently of the names of the personages.

What are commonly called "official pictures" belong to the first class, such as coronations, royal marriages, and ceremonials of all descriptions. Such pictures as Terburg's "Council of Trent," and others of the same kind, belong to this category, because all the interest of the work lies in the faithful portraiture of the figures. Deprive the figures of their historical importance, and all interest in the subject (*as a subject*) vanishes. Of course the picture may have technical excellences which may make it interesting and valuable, but this has nothing to do with the point at issue.

Any trivial incident from the domestic lives of Queen Elizabeth, Charles I, Cromwell, Frederick the Great, etc. (specimens of which are to be found in every exhibition), belong essentially to this class of subjects.

I would hardly class our old friend, "Alfred Minding the Cakes," with these subjects, simply because he did *not* mind them; and the contrast between the disguised monarch's thoughtful and anxious look and the humble task to which he had been set is sufficiently interesting *per se*. Had he done his task cleverly, and toasted the muffins to a turn, this time-honored but apocryphal subject would have been a good specimen of the class I am speaking of.

The following are a few more subjects which will illustrate my meaning:—"Milton Dictating 'Paradise Lost' to his Daughters"; "Francis I Picking up Titian's Brush"; "Sir Isaac Newton Watching an Apple Fall"; "Hampden Refusing to Pay Ship-money." In all these and similar subjects you will observe that no human passions are concerned. The only reason for painting them at all is either because such famous men as Titian, Francis I, and Milton are engaged in them, or because they led to very important scientific and political consequences, as in the falling apple and the ship-money instances.

I would give as instances of the second class of historical subjects:—"The Death of Seneca"; "Charlemagne Crossing the Alps"; "Cæsar Landing in Britain"; "Queen Boadicea Haranguing the Iceni."

These are all well known, and, indeed, rather hackneyed subjects, but they will serve as examples of what I mean. There is a certain dramatic quality about them which fits them for pictorial treatment, independently of the particular history attached to each; and these are, in my opinion, the best kind of historical subjects.

Events which do not concern the life of any particular person are also very pictorial, provided always there is plenty of the dramatic element in them:—"A Man Escaping to a City of Refuge"; "A Departure of Emigrants"; "A Rescue from Fire"; "Launching the Life-Boat"; "Return from Victory,"

are all eminently suitable for painting, and yet there are no kings and queens, nor even distinguished statesmen, poets, or philosophers to be introduced. There are human interests of various kinds to be excited, and this is quite enough.

War episodes are always interesting. We do not care to know the exact spot or date of the engagement, we have no curiosity about the names of the combatants, nor even much about their nationality. The scene itself is sufficiently exciting without any accompanying explanation. It is true that there are plenty of highly uninteresting battle-pictures, but the fault lies with the treatment and not with the subject.

In selecting a subject, no matter whether from mythology, Scripture, history, fiction, or every-day life, care should be taken to choose one which has unity of action. There ought to be a story in your subject, but not more than *one* story. In your secondary groups you may have separate action and by-play, but they ought somehow to be connected with the main story of the picture, and instead of distracting the attention from the subject, they ought rather to assist in concentrating it. Where there is more than one centre of interest in a picture, the effect, dramatically speaking, is weakened.

The old masters often disregarded the tolerably self-evident rule.

The famous Transfiguration picture of Raffaele is a well-known instance in point. The interest is di-

vided between the Transfiguration proper and the demoniac boy. Although some of the figures are pointing upward, yet the faces are all turned toward the demoniac, and he is certainly the principal focus of interest.

This blemish in Raffaele's picture is all the more unaccountable, as no mention is anywhere made of a demoniac having been present at the time ; but the old masters (especially those of the German schools) abound in incongruities of this kind. I remember seeing somewhere a picture of the "Martyrdom of St. Lorenzo."

The saint is about to be roasted alive, but the largest and most prominent figure in the picture is one of the executioners, who is making a horrible face, having got some of the smoke in his eye. The introduction of these irrelevant and grotesque episodes cannot be justified, however well they may be painted ; and if it be granted that it is undesirable to *select* a subject in which there is more than one centre of interest, how much more objectionable is it to *invent* disturbing incidents which are not recorded in the text of the subject.

As an extreme instance of a bad selection of subject, I have always thought that nothing could beat Shakespeare's "Seven Ages of Man." The lines suggest seven distinct subjects having no connection whatever with each other. Each is very good of its kind ; to attempt to amalgamate them all into one

picture is quite absurd. The result is extremely unpleasant ; suggesting a company of strolling players, each rehearsing his part, or perhaps the court-yard of a mediæval lunatic asylum.

In justice to Mulready I ought to mention that he did not *select* " the seven ages of man " as a subject for his picture. He had the impossible task imposed upon him by a liberal but injudicious patron.

For decorative work (for a frieze, for instance) such subjects as the " seven ages of man " are well suited, because each " age " can be treated separately, forming as it were a picture of itself, the only bond of union between the seven being that the figures should be of the same proportion, and should be similar in style and execution.

Another good rule to observe in selecting a subject is to choose one which has illustrative action in it. What I mean by this is that the action of the figures should be sufficient to explain the subject. You cannot put words issuing from their mouths as is done in caricature, you must therefore explain your story by action and expression. We will take as examples two not dissimilar subjects. One shall be a meeting of conspirators, and the other a conference of philosophers. Of course, I don't mean to insinuate that there is any analogy between philosophers and conspirators, but that in both cases we have five or six figures seated round a table. In the first we should represent our conspirators, in

close conclave, leaning over the table with their heads near together, one or two perhaps grasping their daggers, another looking round anxiously—in short, it would be very evident from the expression and attitude of the figures that they were about some villainous work.

If we now turn to the other subject, the conference of philosophers, how are we to express the purport of their conversation? What facial muscles are called into play when men are talking metaphysics or expounding their theories of evolution? It is clear that, however exquisite the execution of the picture may be, the subject of it will be unintelligible, without explanation, and even with the necessary elucidation it will be inferior to the conspirators in dramatic interest.

The subject I gave you in the life-school some time ago (I mean Peter's denial of Christ) is an eminently good one, because if properly treated it is impossible to mistake the meaning of the figures. The menacing interrogatory of the woman, Peter's alarm for his personal safety, and the jeers of the soldiers who are sitting round the fire, are all well adapted for pictorial expression. Any one who had never read the New Testament, an unconverted Chinaman for instance, would say at once: "This young woman is taxing a middle-aged man with something he denies, but there is such downright assertion in her action and such fear mixed up with

his denial, that the accusation, whatever it is, must be true."

No subject can be called a really good one which requires a long explanation to make it intelligible. Thus subjects in which the figures are assuming characters which do not properly belong to them are unfit for painting. For example, in the "conspirators" just mentioned, it might very well have happened that to conceal their sinister designs they assumed the mask of joviality, but you should not select this particular phase of the story.

On the stage, this kind of make-believe is managed by an "aside." The actor takes the audience into his confidence when he says, "Here comes the king, let us dissemble," and accordingly for the next ten minutes or so you are to understand that he is not the obsequious sycophant he pretends to be, and lest by chance you should forget that he is dissembling, he will come forward and frown, clench his fist or point contemptuously over his shoulder at his fellow-actor, who, strangely enough, never seems to see these ominous gestures.

All this is understood and accepted on the stage, but it does not do in a picture. I would, therefore, advise you as much as possible to choose subjects which can be understood at a glance. Let your personages appear in their natural characters, and not assuming parts which do not belong to them.

Acts of mercy, such as clothing the naked, feed-

ing the hungry, visiting the sick, etc., are all good subjects, because the meaning is explained directly by the action of the figures.

Speaking for myself, I have but little sympathy with subjects taken from works of fiction.

The artist who selects them for pictorial treatment seems to me to abnegate whatever creative power he may possess, and to become an illustrator or translator of other men's thoughts. Homer, Dante, and Milton are of course exceptional poets. Their creations are heroic, and the personifications of their heroes would be either nude or sternly classical. Besides, they never descend to minute particulars, and the artist is left very much to his own invention. The more detail an author gives, and the more picturesque the detail, the less fitted are his works for figure-pictures. Scott and Dickens are eminently unpaintable ; that is, it is a hopeless task to illustrate them. Pictures taken from their works are always disappointing. The *Ivanhoes*, the *Mrs. Gamps*, and the *Pecksniffs* of our imagination are always superior to their effigies on canvas, and this is more or less the case with the personages of Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Molière.

Costume has a great deal to do with the choice of a subject, and this, no doubt, is the reason why the works of Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Molière are such favorite hunting-grounds for artists. If the Prince of Denmark had been a modern heir-appar-

ent, attired in a frock coat, tweed trousers, and a chimney-pot hat, or if Malvolio had worn the dress of an ordinary British butler, we should not often see them painted.

For one picture taken from Thackeray's modern novels, we find dozens illustrating Tennyson's "Idyls of the King," or his "Holy Grail."

Now, although the question of costume must always be an important factor in the selection of a subject, it ought not to be the only one. A picture should not be painted *merely* for the sake of the costumes. This seemed to me the principal fault in the large Austrian pictures of the International Exhibition ; and I may add that it is a fault which is not altogether unknown in England.

There is one more class of subjects which I have not yet noticed, and that is the domestic or "genre" class ; the pictures, in short, of every-day life. Pictures of this kind are much less dependent on a good choice of subject than those which illustrate some historical incident. They are generally prized for the brilliancy and harmony of their color, or for the delicacy of their execution ; and if these qualities exist in a high degree, the subject is a minor consideration.

Still it ought to be a consideration, and in choosing subjects of this class you should prefer those which are typical of the personages you have to represent. If you attempt rustic pictures, not

only should your figures look like peasants, but the subject should be thoroughly bucolic.

A dirty ploughman plodding wearily homeward along a muddy lane on a dull November evening seems commonplace and prosaic enough, and yet the subject would not be deficient in pictorial interest. It would be typical of the man's hard and comfortless life. It would be in perfect harmony with his furrowed face, his bony limbs, and his stooping gait.

It would not only represent that particular ploughman in that particular lane, but it would give a true though mournful impression of farm-laborers generally.

I should much prefer for the subject of a picture, a common episode from the life of a laborer to an uncommon one.

Again, if I wished to represent the same man at home, I should endeavor, without exaggeration, to give the squalor of his surroundings, and should not, out of my inner consciousness, evolve an ideal peasant surrounded by a comely family, and looking (as Dickens has somewhere said) as if he had "spent his little All in soap."

Artists understand pretty well nowadays that in painting rustic subjects, honesty is the best policy. The great success of the French painter, Millet, was due entirely to his uncompromising honesty of purpose, and to the unerring judgment with which he selected his subjects.

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There *are* pretty girls (even in France) amongst the peasant class, although they are certainly rare. There are plenty of *fête* days when every woman makes herself as smart as she can ; but Millet knew better than to paint pretty girls and smart dresses. Instead of this, he depicted the true types of French peasantry, gaunt, hard-featured women, dressed in the coarsest garments, and shod with wooden sabots. The novelty of truth was unwelcome at first to the Parisian public. They had so long been accustomed to Opera Comique peasants that they had lost relish for the genuine article ; but by degrees they began to perceive that these uncouth figures were very like the Jeannes and the Victoires they knew *à la campagne*. Moreover, they did not fail to observe that the subjects chosen by the artist were of that homely, agricultural kind peculiar to the French peasantry. They smelt of the village dunghill, and this was the great secret of their success.

I am often told by people who don't know much about art, that they have thought of "such a capital subject for a picture," and it generally turns out to be something odd or incongruous, and not at all fitted for painting. For several years we have had pictures sent in for exhibition, representing children playing at judge and jury, police-courts, auctions, etc. In these pictures the children are all dressed up to represent policemen, barristers, plaintiffs, and

defendants. Moreover, they have so thoroughly learned their parts that their action is no longer childlike. Some of these pictures are very well painted, but the principle is so wrong and false that we now invariably refuse them admission.

Children should, in a picture, be engaged on something childlike. Thus it would be perfectly natural for children to play at being wild beasts, making use of any bear or wolf skin which happened to be handy. Coach-and-horses, hen-and-chickens, are again legitimate games for children, and therefore proper for painting; but in the arts we don't want elaborately got-up burlesque.

A group of young children on the sea-sands, at work with their wooden shovels, would by some be thought a stupid kind of subject, hardly worthy of being painted at all; but make the same children overtaken by the tide, with a steep cliff behind them, and probably you will have a great success, especially if you make your little figures expressing their fear or courage in a theatrical and unchild-like manner.

The first group would be a typical one—typical of the seaside and childhood; the second would not be absolutely impossible (like the bewigged and be-helmeted youngsters above mentioned), but it would be somewhat exceptional, and therefore, in my opinion, not so suitable for painting as the first group.

In the same way with landscape, the spot you

select for pitching your umbrella should not be mean and ugly, neither should it be overpoweringly grand and beautiful. Pictures representing the Falls of Niagara or the gorges of the Rocky Mountains are generally failures. I have in a former lecture praised the Belgian landscape-painters, and I think that a good deal of their merit lies in the happy choice of subjects. They are certainly not classical, like the old school of French landscape-painters, nor do they affect the dreariest commonplace, like some of the moderns. They neither paint precipices and snowy mountains, nor dull stretches of poplar-skirted high-road. Their pictures are to me most interesting, not only on account of their technical excellence, but from the good taste shown in the selection of the subjects.

Incidents which are out of harmony with the character of the persons engaged, form capital materials for caricature. The late John Leech showed the nicest discrimination in his selection of subjects. When he gave us pictures of character, nothing could be better than his sporting scenes, or his bits from the mining districts. When he wanted to raise a laugh at something paradoxical, he would give us a lot of mutes making merry after a respectable funeral, or a used-up swell eating periwinkles with a pin on the top of a 'bus. In both these cases it was the sharp contrast between the usual habits of the persons and their exceptional occupation at the time

which made the fun, and very good fun it was too ; but in an oil picture which takes some months to paint, the humor ought to be of a more delicate kind. I know of no better example of the kind of humor I mean than Wilkie's " Blind Fiddler."

Before closing my lecture I should wish to notice a certain kind of pictures which do not fit in well with any of the classes I have mentioned. The pictures I mean are those which are painted expressly to teach some lesson, or to inculcate some moral precept. The great originator of this kind of art was Hogarth. Before him nothing of the sort had ever been done, and since his death no artist has equalled him in this particular line. Much, however, as I admire Hogarth as a painter, I cannot coincide with all the praise that has been showered on him as a great moral teacher. He has often been compared to Molière, but the great Frenchman attacked the vices and follies of his day with a sharp rapier, whereas Hogarth wielded a heavy bludgeon. Indeed, I think it very doubtful whether our art can be converted into an active agent in the cause of morality. The touches of ridicule which a clever writer uses with so much effect are very apt to become ponderous when embedded in oil paint. Hogarth's reputation may well be allowed to rest on his numerous technical excellences without hoisting him upon a pedestal as a great apostle of morality. In like manner the name of Cruickshank will be preserved as the clever

draughtsman and caricaturist, and not as the champion of teetotalism.

In mitigation, however, of Hogarth's sledge-hammer style of belaboring vice, we must bear in mind that the age in which he lived was a very gross and brutal one, and that his "Rake's Progress," his "Marriage à la Mode," and similar works, which to us appear exaggerated or caricatured, were considered by his contemporaries to be very true to nature.

To return to the proper business this evening, which is not to criticise painters and their work, but to discuss subjects for painting, I cannot say I particularly delight in the class under notice.

Whoever takes up these subjects becomes (involuntarily perhaps) a kind of missionary agent for the cause he takes up, whether it be teetotalism, humanitarianism, or the redressing of the wrongs of our old friend, the "poor governess"; and as with some other agents, his zeal often outruns his discretion, and he is apt to thrust forward his moral too obtrusively. When this kind of picture is painted in pairs, after the fashion of Hogarth's "Industrious and Idle Apprentice," there is a sort of poster or advertisement flavor about the work, reminding one a little of "what I was, and what I am" in connection with Mrs. Allen's hairwash, or of "before and after using anti-fat."

No one can, of course, object to such antithetic pictures as "Summer and Winter," "Peace and

War," "Youth and Age," etc. ; but where the practice of showing both sides of the medal becomes objectionable, is when the work is evidently intended to be didactic. I don't know what effect these didactic pictures may have on others, but I always feel a kind of impatience at having the contrast between virtue and vice thrust before me in this infant-school fashion.

I do not wish in these lectures to enter upon the domain of high-art ethics ; I have a very decided aversion to the union of painting with abstruse theories of all kinds, but a few words on morality in art may not be out of place.

It must be generally allowed that certain pictures have an immoral tendency : we may, therefore conclude by analogy that others have a moral tendency, but beyond this general truism it is difficult to get.

The art-loving portion of the public needs no Lord Chamberlain to ostracise immoral subjects, but on the other hand, it is rather intolerant of what are called "goody" pictures. Let us rather, instead of preaching homilies with our brush, endeavor to set an example of pictorial morality by adherence to truth, by abstaining from clap-trap tricks and meretricious execution ; by ceasing to pilfer ideas and modes of painting from other artists, and by general honesty of purpose.

If we do this, we may rest assured that our work will have a healthier influence than it would have if more directly enlisted in the cause of morality.



LECTURE XI.

ON THE COMPOSITION OF DECORATIVE AND HISTORICAL PICTURES.

THE art of composing figure-pictures may be divided into two categories, to each of which I intend devoting a lecture.

The first category will comprise all decorative or semi-decorative work, where grandeur and harmony of line is the great desideratum; the graphic rendering of the subject being of minor importance.

The second category would include almost all easel pictures which aspire to represent some historical event, or to illustrate some anecdote. In these pictures the graphic rendering of the subject is the first desideratum, and the pleasant harmony of line only the second.

We will deal this evening with the laws of composition for decorative work.

I ought perhaps to avoid using the word "laws"; art is not an exact science, and no strict law can be laid down about a matter of taste. Still there are certain principles which seem to be accepted by all masters of composition, and certain others which, although not generally accepted, occur to me as likely to be of use to you.

The golden rule for the arrangement of figures in a picture, is that the nature of the subject ought to dictate the lines of the composition. If you have to paint a subject of a quiet, majestic, and dignified class, a subject for all ages, where you wish to express perfect repose and stability, you cannot do better than go back to the pyramid. This pyramidal theory of composition has been much quizzed and laughed at, but that is because the old-fashioned dilettanti who advocated it wanted to apply it universally. Now it is clearly unsuitable for subjects of action, or for filling with figures low long panels ; but for altar pieces, or for pictures which are destined for central places, it is at once the most natural and the most effective method. The quiet and serene dignity of many of the ancient Holy Families and other subjects of sacred art is due mainly to the pyramidal form of grouping.

Sometimes the form is that of a truncated pyramid, as in the Hemicycle at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, where the object of the painter was to represent an ideal Areopagus of Art.

In the compositions of Masaccio and Filippino Lippi we have good examples of a horizontal style of arrangement. The structure of these groups is suggestive of solid simple architectural forms, and has a kind of dignity of its own ; but though suitable enough for frescoes of the fifteenth century, it is hardly picturesque or varied enough for modern oil-pictures.



Mural paintings, particularly when they represent grave or sacred subjects, should more or less partake of this horizontal and rectilinear form of composition.

A certain amount of deviation is necessary, and it is in fixing the limit of this deviation that the skill of the artist is shown.

Too little would make his composition formal and lifeless.

Too much would take away from the symmetry which befits such subjects.

The Stanze of Raffaello are noble examples of skill and taste in composition.

Nothing can be finer than his "School of Athens," his "Parnassus," and his "Theology."

Here we find variety of line combined with a dignified simplicity. It is the arrangement and composition of these grand frescoes which in my opinion justifies the position Raffaello holds in the history of art, rather than the beauty of his Madonnas or the bold drawing of his somewhat overrated cartoons.

Later artists of the Roman school overdid the picturesque element, and lost the stately simplicity which characterizes the second manner of Raffaello.

In modern times, Ingres' "Apotheosis of Homer" is a good example of what a mural painting should be. Severe in drawing and dignified in composition, it is yet by no means deficient in those more attractive qualities which are commonly expressed by the word "picturesque."



Flandrin's frieze at St. Vincent de Paul is another magnificent specimen of an exquisite sense of fitness. There is hardly a figure in the whole procession of apostles, saints, and martyrs, which could be improved. I know of no modern work which is so perfect of its kind.

It is, of course, preposterous to suppose that good composition can be taught in a couple of evenings ; but if I succeed in impressing on you the importance of this rather neglected branch of study, I shall not have lectured in vain.

We will begin with the simplest problem, namely, how to fill up with figures an elongated rectangular space or frieze.

The most obvious method is to set up a row of figures of the same size and all in profile, as was done by the ancient Egyptians. Now this mode of treatment, though suitable enough for the Nile temples, would obviously be unfit for buildings of the nineteenth century.

The figures should preserve a certain regularity, a certain frieze-like arrangement, and yet the attitudes should be varied, and the work should not look as if it had been done by machinery.

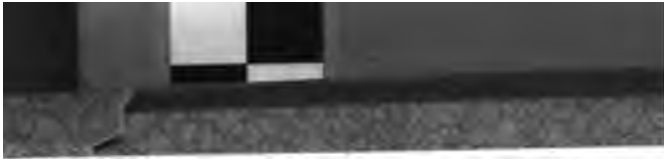
The first improvement on the Egyptian method would be to break the monotony by here and there grouping two or even three figures together. As in these groups of two or three one figure must be behind the others, and therefore farther off from the



spectator, it would be smaller, the head would be lower, and you would at once get a little variety in the line of heads. To vary your line of heads simply by arguing that some people are six feet high whilst others are only five, does not answer in decorative painting. You *may* assume that the male figures are bigger than the female, but you must proceed as if your men were all of the same (or very nearly) of the same height, and your women ought also to vary very little in stature. Children you may introduce of any size, from the infant in arms to the youth or maiden of fifteen; but let them be unmistakably children, and not little men and women.

The individual action of the figures would of course depend very much on the destination of the work. If it were intended for the decoration of a church, the figures would of course represent patriarchs, apostles, or martyrs, and a severe and simple arrangement would be necessary. If, on the other hand, your frieze were to decorate a theatre or ball-room, the figures should have more action, and naturally the lines would be more broken. Whatever the subject, however,—whether maskers, musicians, or morris-dancers,—there should be a certain frieze-like symmetry in the composition. You should never forget that you are engaged on a decorative work, and not on an easel picture.

A rule which it is well to observe in all decorative work is to avoid cutting off any portion of the figures.



This is quite unavoidable in many easel pictures. If you have a crowd of people to represent, you cannot isolate some of them so completely that no portion of the others should be visible.

An easel or gallery picture is bounded on every side by the frame, and the eye is not shocked at all by seeing portions of the figures cut off. Although every one knows that the figures do not extend behind the frame, yet it is easy to suppose that they do, and the eye allows itself to be cheated into this belief; but in decorative or mural painting there is no solid framework round the picture isolating it from the surrounding wall. There may be an ornamental border or possibly a light moulding, but this is not enough to permit the practice. Michael Angelo, in his decorations of the Sistine Chapel, often carried his figures and draperies right out of the panels allotted to them, and this boldness adds to the grand, free character of the work.

The problem of how to fill up the irregular-shaped wall spaces which continually occur both in Gothic and Palladian architecture is of course more complex.

These spaces have generally curved sides, and in many of them—as, for instance, the spandrels of arches—the curve is concave. Straight horizontal lines of heads which are generally so desirable for long rectilinear spaces here become very objectionable.

Bold convex outlines for the groups, and an



arrangement for the heads which does not suggest either horizontal or vertical lines, ought to be the rule in these cases.

Nothing can be finer than M. Angelo's treatment of the sybils and prophets in the Sistine Chapel. There is a majestic dignity about them which is due rather to their full convex outlines than to their colossal proportions.

On the other hand, in many of the compositions by the early Florentines we have long horizontal rows of heads which seem out of harmony with the arched space they fill. The circular nimbi take off somewhat from the meagre character of these lines, and there is considerable beauty about the individual figures, but viewed as decorative works they are very unsatisfactory.

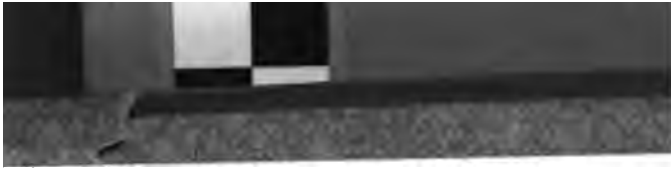
It is, of course, impossible to devise rules for all conditions of decorative and historical painting, but a few general hints may be useful to you.

1st. Beware of concave lines for the outlines of your groups.

2d. Avoid sharp angles, and particularly right angles, unless you wish to draw special attention to them.

3d. Be very careful about the relative position of the heads, so that viewed as points of interest they do not form any regular geometrical pattern.

These three rules seem to me the most important ones to be observed in the composition of decorative figure-pictures, and we will examine them *seriatim*.



The first rule I have given is to avoid concave forms for the general outline of the groups. There is no rule without exceptions, and to this one there are a good many ; still it will be found that, speaking generally, convex outlines give grandeur wherever they are introduced. This convexity in the form of the groups need not be dependent on the outlines of the figures themselves ; it may be got by introducing drapery or other accessories. I know of no example showing the value of full convex outlines more strikingly than the Madonna di S. Sisto. In the pictures of the Umbrian school, on the contrary, we find extreme poverty of line. The figures themselves are not particularly attenuated, but they are not sufficiently connected together nor enveloped in those useful pieces of flowing drapery which give such grandeur and fulness to the works of Fra Bartholomeo, Sebastian del Piombo, and other painters of the Roman school.

I have in former lectures entered fully into the subject of convex lines being almost always associated with forward movement, and concave with retreat, and need not go over the same ground again.

I would, however, observe that the terms boldness and convexity are almost synonymous when applied to outline ; thus when we speak of a mountain having a bold outline, we mean that though steep and precipitous it is bluff or convex in form. A mountain with a depression on the top, or surmounted by a

sharp-pointed cone, would hardly ever be noted for its bold outline.

The second rule to which I wish to call your attention is the avoidance of right angles in the composition of your figures.

All angles, unless they be obtuse ones, are to be deprecated, but the most objectionable of all are the right angles. In a single figure, rectangular outlines are not so unpleasant, but I cannot agree with those who think that the big seated Egyptian figures with which we are all familiar, owe their grandeur to their rectangular contour. I have no doubt but that these gigantic figures in their native swamp, and illumined by an Egyptian moon, would look very imposing, but the solemn grandeur of their aspect would be due to their size and to their surroundings, and not to their harsh rectangular outline. If the "Moses" of Michael Angelo could be magnified to the size of these figures and transported to the banks of the Nile, I fully believe he would be far more impressive.

Simplicity and grandeur are often bracketed together as though the terms were almost synonymous; but they certainly are not so. The street and chapel architecture of the Georgian era was simple even to baldness, but no one can call it grand.

It is not, however, in single figures that right angles are so much to be avoided, as in complicated groups of several figures. Here they arrest and distract the eye, giving harshness to the composition,

and destroying the look of spontaneous action and easy-flowing movement which figures always should have.

Rubens in his "Descent from the Cross" has avoided these disagreeable angles, but in many of his more careless compositions, where there is violent action, they are painfully conspicuous, in spite of his liberal use of flying draperies. Hence his cavalry skirmishes, though full of violence and contortion, are quite wanting in spontaneous "go."

Right angles in a group of figures convey the idea of immovability. Hence, although generally undesirable, it is well sometimes to introduce them.

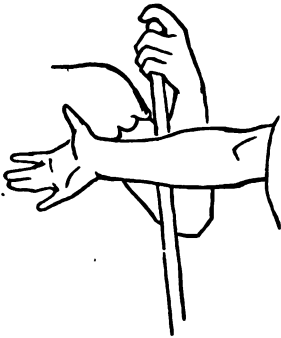


Thus a kneeling warrior firmly planted to resist onslaught might with propriety have both knees right angles.

In this case we wish to give the idea of fixture, and therefore rectangular forms are not only allowable but very useful. Again, in the case of a wounded man endeavoring to raise himself, the angle formed by his right arm might



with propriety be a right angle, because we want to show that the man is wounded and cannot raise himself without difficulty.



If he were uninjured and in full possession of his strength, we ought to represent his springing up in some other way.

In the very frequent case of two arms crossing each other, they should not cross at right angles.

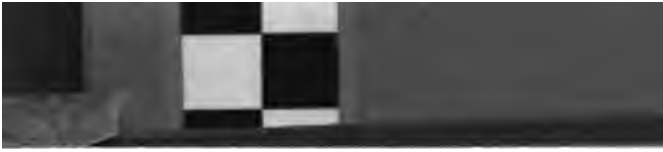
There is no reason here for expressing immovability at the point where the arms cross, and therefore the formality of right angles should be avoided.

We will now pass on to the third rule, namely, that relating to the heads of the figures.

Whatever the subject of the picture, the eye is always attracted to the heads. It is therefore of the highest importance that their relative positions should be carefully considered.



In the annexed diagram, it is of no use arguing that one of the heads is a full face, another three-quarters, a third a profile, and the fourth a back view of the head. The



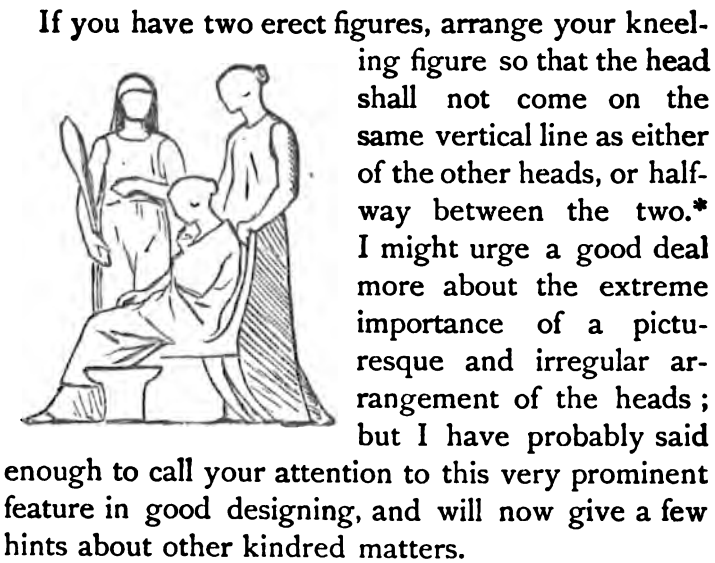
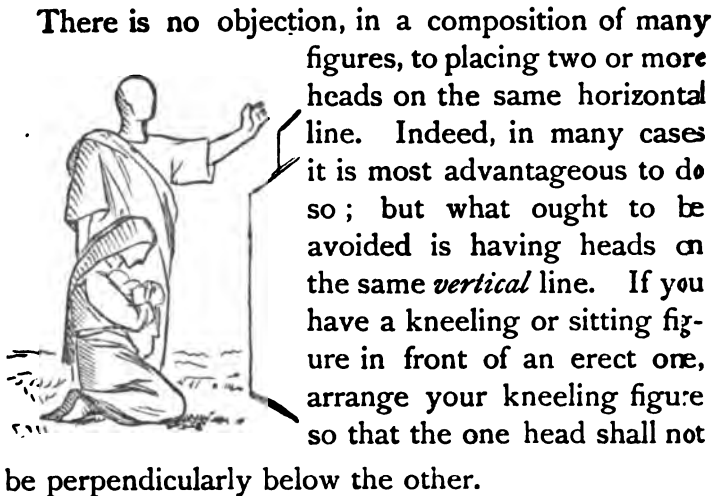
four heads are all points of interest. They are equidistant, and placed on a segment of the same circle, and, turn them whichever way you will, you cannot get rid of the unpleasantness of the arrangement, so long as you keep them in their present relative positions.

In the next figure we have four heads suggesting



a quadrilateral of lozenge shape.* This is also very objectionable, and it is a case of frequent occurrence. In both these diagrams, by shifting the position of one of the heads, we should break up the symmetrical arrangement which so much offends the cultivated eye.

* Taken from the "Acouchement de la Reine" (one of the "Medici" series) by Rubens.



* All these diagrams illustrate a faulty arrangement.



Converging lines are to be avoided, unless there is something of interest to which you wish to direct attention at the point of convergence. This is by no means an exaggerated specimen of the evil ; but the effect of these four arms all converging toward one point is unpleasant. If the personages were disputing over a manuscript, or trying to clutch a bag of gold lying on the table, then the manuscript or the gold would be the centre of interest in the picture ; and converging lines would not only be excusable, but absolutely necessary. Where there is nothing of particular interest at the point where the lines meet, the eye feels disappointed at being misled.



Although converging lines are generally to be avoided, it often happens that a repetition of the same kind of curve gives force and unity of purpose to a group. Observe the convex curves formed by the backs of these suppliants. Their repetition gives unity of purpose. A perpendicular kneeling figure might individually be just as





expressive, but as one of a group he would take away somewhat from the general character of unity in supplication.

One of the most difficult problems the designer of large mural pictures has to solve, is to introduce with good effect raised arms and hands, especially when they belong to the background figures. When possible, it is better to keep them out of sight altogether; but in some subjects you would by so doing inevitably lose expression and animation, and it becomes necessary to introduce here and there an upraised arm with extended hand. This is easy enough to do if you are reckless about the lines of your composition, but if you are fastidious, it is a very difficult problem.

In the first place, they distract the eye, destroying the full bold outline of your groups, and, secondly, there is a comic element about them which it is rather difficult to avoid. When, as in many of Raffaele's Loggie, the whole of the figures which are raising their arms are seen, the effect is bad and trivial; but there is nothing particularly comical about it. When, however, an arm crops up here and there from the unseen figures of the background, it is difficult to avoid the ludicrous. Cases may occur when a whole forest of hands will have to be raised, as in an oath of allegiance; but here the action of raising the arms is inseparable from the subject.

My remarks apply only to upraised arms as indicative of wonder, joy, or grief.



All these hints about designing may appear to some of you rather far-fetched, but if ever you get experience in decorative painting, I think you will find they are not far from the truth.

The art of good grouping is not of spontaneous growth. You may have a general idea of how you are to fill your canvas or wall-space, and that idea may be a good one, but all the details of the groups have to be worked out bit by bit. A change in the attitude of one figure will be almost sure to entail a change in a good many others, and it often happens that, after giving yourself a good deal of trouble, you will have to go back to your first idea.

A conscientious and fastidious designer may be compared to an Arctic explorer picking his way in an ice-pack. He will have to saw through one ice-barrier, to blow up another with gunpowder, to circumvent a third, and when, after surmounting all these difficulties, he thinks his course clear and open water at hand, he may have to retrace his steps and seek some other channel.

I am perfectly aware that in painting small easel pictures all this groping after fine lines may be unnecessary, nay, even detrimental to the life-like spirit of the composition.

"Our own correspondent's" sketches at the seat of war (if done on the spot, which I am afraid they not always are) will be not only more interesting but better composed than if he had sat at home and trust-



ed to his imagination; but in this lecture I am not dealing with easel pictures and realistic subjects, and I repeat that in decorative figure-painting excellence can only be obtained by a continuous process of altering, modifying, adding, and omitting.

In the same way that the lines and general grouping of a picture should be arranged with a view to expressing the subject with dignity and grandeur, so the management of light and shade should tend toward the same end, and it is as impossible to lay down strict rules for light and shade as for outline designing. Didactic writers on art will tell you that the principal light ought to fall on the principal figure—

“ Fair in the front in all the blaze of light,
The hero of thy piece should meet the sight.”

Sir Joshua Reynolds remarks very justly on this piece of doggerel, that there is no necessity for the principal figure to be placed in the middle of the picture, or receive the principal light. He goes on to say that “ this conduct, if always observed, would reduce the art of composition to too great a uniformity,” and that “ it is sufficient if the place he holds, or the attention of the other figures to him, denote him the hero of the piece.”

In works which partake strongly of a decorative character this axiom about “ Fair in the front in all the blaze of light ” for the principal figure may



be tolerably true, but in historical pictures something more unforeseen is wanted.

In the often-painted subject of the "Death of Cæsar," I should be very much inclined to put the Cæsar in the shade, and the tyrannicides with their flashing daggers in the light. It appears to me that to throw a shade over the face of the prostrate emperor would somehow or other convey the idea of the shadow of death, which is overspreading him, and the reproachful "Et tu Bruté" would come with greater pathos from a figure half-veiled in shadow than from one in broad daylight. We will suppose now that instead of having the death of Cæsar to paint we have the "Stoning of St. Stephen." The subject is analogous. The young man named Saul and the Jewish executioners of Stephen were not common assassins any more than the murderers of Cæsar. Shall we, therefore, adopt the same plan with the figure of Stephen as we did with that of Cæsar and put him in the shade? I say, Certainly not. Stephen was the first Christian martyr. We read that his face was as that of an angel, and he ought to be surrounded by an angélic halo of light, and this treatment need not be dictated by the text. We should come to the same conclusion simply on the grounds of pictorial fitness. Stephen was a voluntary martyr, and gloried in his own death. Cæsar was assassinated much against his will; and although we are told that he covered his face with



his toga and died with dignity, yet he certainly cannot be called a martyr.

I have introduced these two subjects to show you how hopeless it is to attempt to lay down general rules such as old Du Fresnoy gives us in his poem on the art of painting. Every new theme you undertake to illustrate ought to have a treatment special to itself if you wish to produce a fresh and original picture. When the master of a vessel is starting on a voyage, he would not steer S. W. by W. $\frac{1}{2}$ W. because that happened to be the course he steered the last time he was at sea, nor would he run up his skyscrapers and set his studding-sails because he carried all his light canvas the last voyage out.

He would consult his chart, the state of the tide, the direction of the wind, and act accordingly. In short, for this new voyage, the condition of the wind, tide, and barometer being new, he would give new orders to his mate and crew.

Substituting the brain for the master, the hand for the mate, and the brushes for the crew, we ought to set about our pictures much in the same way.

After giving the subject of light and shade a good deal of thought, it appears to me that there is only *one* rule which invariably applies to all pictures, and that is, that there should be a uniform scale of tone throughout the work. The gradient, from light to shade, may be very steep as in Rembrandt, or very



gentle as in P. Veronese, but this gradient or transition should not be abrupt in one part of the picture, and gentle in another. The whole work (whatever scale you adopt) should be homogeneous.

Sir. J. Reynolds and others have endeavored to ascertain the proportion of light to shade in the works of the old masters. I believe these experimental blots have been made rather with a view to black and white than legitimate light and shade; but whatever their object, I don't think that any theory can be built up on them. I am convinced that what the old masters called the *chiaro-oscuro* of their pictures was a matter of feeling, and sometimes of accident, but never of calculation.

Theorists often talk learnedly about secondary and tertiary lights, but the artist never dreamt of them. They are nothing more than the efforts he has made, and the means to which he has resorted, in order to connect the highest light of his principal group with the gloom of his background.

Rembrandt's vigorous light and shade and Correggio's luminous breadth ought to be ascribed to the natural idiosyncrasies of the painters, intensified probably by the conditions under which their works were executed. They were assuredly not the results of calculation or learning.

Modern artists are often credited by their critics with subtleties of which they are perfectly innocent. They introduce into their pictures certain harmonies



of tone or color by a kind of pictorial instinct, but certainly not in obedience to theoretical laws.

In designing a composition of many figures, it is natural to begin with the principal group or centre of interest. When you have got this satisfactorily arranged, you proceed with the less important figures, and it is here that beginners (and some who are by no means beginners) often come to grief.

They get a fine action or a noble attitude for some accessory figure, and they are so much in love with it that they *must* introduce it, whether it is in keeping with the principal group or not. It may (viewed as a single figure) be very good, and yet be injurious to the general harmony of the composition.

Recollect that accessory figures, however good in themselves, if they mar the general effect, ought to be sacrificed.

By so doing you will doubtless raise a cry of lamentation from your friends. They will say, "What *could* have induced you to have scraped out that figure? Why, it was the best thing in the picture," and so on. To which you might reply that you did not want it to be the best thing in the picture, and therefore you erased it.

It was this tendency to introduce some favorite figure where it was not wanted, which rather mars Raffaele's latest manner, as exemplified in the "Transfiguration," and in the "Incendio del Borgo"; and what in Raffaele was only an incipient tendency



became a confirmed habit in the work of his imitators.

Sir J. Reynolds, in his discourses, is continually urging the student of composition to think how the old masters would have treated the subject he is engaged upon, and advises him to imitate their style and manner. Indeed, the sixth discourse is devoted entirely to this principle of imitation. Now, if we were vastly superior to M. Angelo, Raffaelle, and Titian, and held the same relative position to them that they did to their predecessors, I could understand our occasionally adopting their figures, after greatly improving them; but as we should not be likely to improve any figure we had appropriated, we had much better leave the old masters alone. Plagiarism, or, to use a plainer word, "stealing," can only be excused when the plagiarist makes a better use of the property he has appropriated than the original possessor did.

Sir Joshua certainly says that you should "imitate," and not copy servilely. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and if Philippino Lippi could have seen Raffaelle transferring *his* St. Paul into the famous cartoon of the saint preaching at Athens, no doubt he would have felt flattered. But how about Raffaelle? Is it not true that this plagiarism on Raffaelle's part detracts somewhat from his fame? Does not every one, on seeing the Carmine Chapel at Florence, and recognizing the



familiar figure of St. Paul, think somewhat more of Philippino Lippi and somewhat less of Raffaele? I believe that nothing can be more fatal to the career of an artist than *intentional* imitation of another man's work. I say "intentional," because we are all more or less imitators quite unconsciously. We often confound a reminiscence of something we have seen in a picture with a reminiscence of nature, and so become unconscious imitators; but this is a very different thing from deliberately setting aside our own ideas and endeavoring to fancy what would be the ideas of some one else.

It may be argued that Sir J. Reynolds addressed his advice to students and not to mature artists, but the habit of imitating others, when once acquired, is not easily got rid of. A certain degree of excellence may doubtless be attained by following this method, provided the masters imitated are excellent, but, after all, it is only a kind of reflected light, and not to be compared to the electric light of original genius. Besides, the student who follows Sir Joshua's advice may begin by honestly attempting to paint his pictures in the *style* of Raffaele without downright imitation of the figures, but he soon learns to adopt Raffaele's attitudes, Raffaele's expression, and even Raffaele's mannerisms. He becomes, in short, a mere copyist. If this be deplorable in the case of the imitator of Raffaele, how much more deplorable is it to adopt the modes



of thought and expression of an inferior master ! It may be thought by some that in these lectures I often speak disrespectfully of the old masters, but it is certainly not my intention so to do. I have the greatest respect for many of them, though not for all ; but I respect nature and truth still more, and it appears to me that the true artist should go to the fountain-head for his ideas and inspiration, and not to second-hand sources.

It may be answered that it is all very well saying that an artist should go to nature and rely on his own powers of creation and invention, but supposing he is relying on a broken reed ; suppose he cudgels his brain in vain for ideas, what is he to do ? In this case I should advise him, instead of borrowing from the old masters, that he should turn his attention to portrait-painting, landscape, or some branch of the profession where the creative and imaginative faculties are not much required. He may have great imitative power with a dexterous execution ; he may be a charming colorist, or, again, he may be a refined and accomplished draughtsman, and yet be totally unable to give dramatic vitality to a scene he has not himself witnessed.

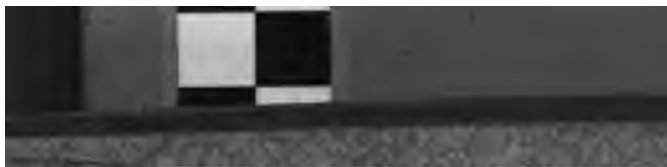
It has always been the fashion to apply the term "high art" to heroic or Scriptural figure-subjects, but I think there is almost as much high art in a noble portrait of Titian or a fine landscape by



Claude as in any historical painting whatever. I object to the term altogether; but if it means any thing, it ought to mean a dignified and poetic view of nature, in contradistinction to a trivial or prosaic view. It ought certainly never to be applied to a pasticcio of the old masters, however plausible such an imitation may be.

In my opinion there is high art in Turner's early pictures, because in them we get the man's own poetic interpretation of nature, but in those works where he attempts to rival Claude I can see nothing but the labor of a skilful imitator.

I have wandered away from the proper subject of this lecture, and have but little time left; but before concluding I should wish to explain that although I am continually urging the extreme importance of *originality* in painting, I do not mean forced singularity or oddity. I mean by the word, the expression of the painter's own sober ideas. A sane man should produce sane work. It may not be very powerful, it may in no way recall Michael Angelo, but it will have qualities of its own. How charming, simple, and unaffected are Flaxman's designs until he got inoculated with the Sistine Chapel lymph! After this inoculation we notice (at least I do) a great change for the worse in his compositions. To graft successfully, the parent stem ought to be of the same nature as the scion or graft. Now Flaxman's nature was gentle, and very appreciative of beauty



and grace. With such a nature he ought to have abstained from attempting the grand and the terrible.

If Flaxman erred in grafting Michael Angelo's manner on his own, what shall we say about Blake? Flaxman was at any rate a good draughtsman, but Blake's ignorance of the first principles of drawing makes his Michael Angelesque imitations simply ludicrous. The successful attempts which have been made of late years to rehabilitate Blake, and to elevate him into a kind of British Michael Angelo, make me almost despair of high art in this country. I do not wish to speak contemptuously of Blake as a poet, but in his pictures (even supposing he had grand ideas) I cannot accept the will for the deed. The frog in the fable had grand ideas when he wished to rival the ox in size, and yet he only made himself ridiculous. Were I to express all I think about the Blake revival, I could hardly confine myself to parliamentary language. I will, therefore, in closing my lecture, simply protest to the best of my power against this strange infatuation.

LECTURE XII.

COMPOSITION OF INCIDENT PICTURES.

IN my last lecture I treated the art of composition as applied to decorative or semi-decorative work—of work intended rather to cover a given wall-space with noble and picturesque forms than to give a dramatic version of any particular incident. My present lecture will be devoted to the composition and arrangement of figure-pictures, whether Biblical, historical, or anecdotic, whose object is to represent in the most forcible way any given incident.

We are far more particular now about the arrangement, or what the French call the *mise en scène*, of a picture, than the old masters ever were. We may not be able to paint like Titian or Correggio, but we attempt an approximation to truth which they never did; and not only is a modern historical painter more truthful about the costumes of his personages and the architecture of his backgrounds, but in the disposition and action of his figures he honestly endeavors to represent the scene as it actually may have occurred. When I say that the modern painter does this, I mean that in my opinion he *ought* to do it. I am quite aware that many artists prefer to look

at nature through the spectacles of the old masters, but it appears to me that all art should be in some measure representative of the age in which it exists. When we come upon a Romanesque, Umbrian, Venetian, Flemish, or eighteenth-century work of art, we can tell at a glance to what period it belongs, and I think that our own time, being one of original thought and research, should in some measure be similarly reflected in our painting.

I have no objection to Gothic architects repeating in modern buildings the narrow staircases, the dim lighting, and other inconvenient peculiarities of the style.

Were they to give us large plate-glass windows and noble flights of steps, they would cease to be Gothic architects ; but I don't think that, however much we painters may admire the old masters, we ought to adopt their modes of composition when we know them to be the result of ignorance, error, or carelessness.

The present graphic method of treating figure-pictures is of quite modern growth, and the innovation extends to all kinds of subjects. Compare any of Giulio Romano's, Rubens', or Lebrun's battle-pieces with those of Raffet, Horace Vernet, or, better still, De Neuville. How unreal the old masters appear !

Recall to mind the Romans of David and his school, and compare them with the best modern rep-



representations of Roman manners and customs. In the one case we may admire the noble drawing and even the classical lines of the composition, but we are never transported back to the scene ; whereas in certain modern pictures we feel on much more intimate terms with the personages. We fancy we are actually a spectator at the Colosseum or a participator in a *fête intime*.

The realism of modern art is due partly to a greater knowledge of, and a greater attention to, costume, architecture, furniture, and all the properties of the stage on which we place our personages, but it is also due to our making truth a primary object.

An incident may be treated truthfully in fifty different ways, but some of these versions of it will be dull, some obscure, and some vulgar, and it is for the artist to select a rendering which, though perfectly truthful, shall be neither dull, obscure, nor vulgar. As soon as he loses sight of truth he ceases to be a realistic painter. He may produce a beautiful picture, but it will partake more or less of what I call semi-decorative work. It is sometimes very difficult to fix a boundary-line between realistic and decorative painting. To which class, for instance, belong the cartoons of Raffaele? Although designed for tapestry, and therefore for decorative purposes, there is too much truth and reality about them to allow of their being classed among purely decorative works ;



whilst, on the other hand, we can hardly admit that they are like the scenes they are meant to represent.

The heads are Italian rather than Jewish or Oriental, and sometimes (as, for instance, in the "Miraculous Draught of Fishes") pictorial liberties are taken which are quite inadmissible in realistic work.

I may here observe that in this lecture I shall not use the word realistic in the bad sense in which it has generally come to be used.

The term is now generally employed to designate some ugly or offensive piece of reality which is prominently thrust upon our notice by the artist; as when Quintin Matseys gives us wrinkled and abnormally ugly old men, or when a modern French painter throws all his talent into depicting the thick viscosity of a pool of arterial blood. Reality is only in rare instances repellent, and I can see no good reason for confining the word to these exceptional cases.

In historical, or what may be called incident pictures, the main object of the artist ought to be to tell his story forcibly, clearly, and pathetically.

We have seen that in work partaking of a decorative character the principal object of the designer should be to group his figures in a noble and picturesque manner, to attend to his drawing, and if possible to add the charm of agreeable color to his work.

In realistic historical painting he has something else to occupy his thoughts. He must by no means neglect the lines of his groups, he must avoid dis-



agreeable angles, equidistant heads, convergent lines where they are not wanted, and all the other rocks and shoals on which many a composition has been wrecked, but in addition to this he must tell his story truthfully and clearly.

Much more latitude in the matter of arrangement may be allowed him than would be conceded to the painter of decorative subjects.

He may (if he thinks fit) huddle up all his figures into a corner of the canvas, or he may place them all in the centre, leaving the sides unoccupied.

In short, he may take great liberties with the laws of composition, provided always these liberties tend to assist in giving reality to the scene.

The more picturesque or melodramatic the subject, the more he may depart from the usual rules of composition,

Paul Delaroche was, I think, the first of the numerous cohort of modern painters who have striven to combine truthful sentiment with pictorial fitness, and of all his works the "Assassination of the Duc de Guise" is perhaps the most striking.

The arrangement of this picture is as dramatic as it is truthful. On one side of the picture we have the murdered duke lying on his back, stone dead. The group of assassins are quite separated from their victim, and are giving themselves no further trouble about him; and yet the greatest ignoramus, who knew nothing whatever about the story, would



have no hesitation in divining it, so graphically is the incident told.

Again, if we recall to mind another and a better known picture by the same master, I mean that known as "*Les Enfants d'Edouard*," we find the same subtle taste displayed.

I may here note that the color of neither of these pictures is in any way remarkable. Indeed, that of the "*Princes*" is positively bad, being very purple and inky; but their enduring popularity rests on a more solid foundation than mere color. It rests entirely on their truthful and poetic treatment. I call the treatment "*poetic*," because a dull prose reading of both these subjects would have represented the murders as actually being committed, whereas by choosing the moment in the one case immediately *after* the murder, and in the other just *before*, the artist avoids all the stabbing, hacking, and smothering business, and increases rather than diminishes our interest in the victims. Gerome's "*Death of Cæsar*" is another example of novel treatment of a hackneyed subject. He also represents the deed as done. The conspirators have sneaked off. The benches of the senate-house are all but deserted, the only occupant being a very fat senator, who is fast asleep on one of the benches, somewhere near the centre of the amphitheatre. How much more empty the senate-house looks, with this portly old Roman snoring on his bench, than it would do if entirely deserted!



I do not wish to lecture on modern pictures, but I mention this "Death of Cæsar" by Gerome as an instance of a happy departure from the usual treatment of the subject. Indeed, it appears to me that all assassinations, martyrdoms, executions, and such-like subjects, if painted at all, should be approached in some roundabout way.

The action of stabbing, cutting a head off, or sending a bullet through a man's body, is instantaneous; and although an executioner, with his drawn sword and uplifted arm about to decapitate his victim, may be startling and sensational at first sight, yet after a time the feeling of horror or of pity gives place to a sort of impatience that he is so long before striking the blow.

One of the Orleans princes had a picture of a military execution, which he admired very much at first. By and by, however, he got tired of it, and ultimately sold it or gave it away, not because it was too much for his feelings, but because he was heartily sick of seeing the squad taking aim day after day and month after month, and never firing.

Although the best modern masters of dramatic composition have probably been guided by sentiment rather than by rule, still a few observations on the treatment of certain subjects may not be out of place in this lecture. Thus, if the subject be a departure of pilgrims or emigrants, the figures should be placed on that side of the canvas which is op-



posed to the direction in which they are going. If it be an arrival, they should be placed on the side opposed to the direction whence they came. In both these cases, the large portion of canvas without figures is not wasted; it assists materially in telling the story.

In the first case, it represents the journey to be undertaken, and in the second the journey just performed. If we had to paint a shipwrecked sailor who has just reached the shore, we ought to let very little of the shore be seen, but plenty of raging sea. Here the interest of the subject lies in the formidable dangers he has escaped, so we ought to devote the greater portion of our canvas to the breakers, and relegate our mariner and the bit of slippery rock to which he is clinging to a corner.

If, on the other hand, we wished to represent our shipwrecked man clinging to a spar in the open sea, with no land visible, we ought to place him right in the middle of the canvas, so as to give the impression of hopeless isolation; and if we wished to convey the idea that he might possibly be rescued, we would paint a sail on the horizon, and near the edge of the picture. I should place it near the edge, in order that it might appear to have just come in sight, and that hope of rescue was dawning. If we were to put the same vessel in the middle of the picture, and bearing down upon the drowning man, we might feel equally certain that he would be saved, but the effect would hardly be as dramatic.

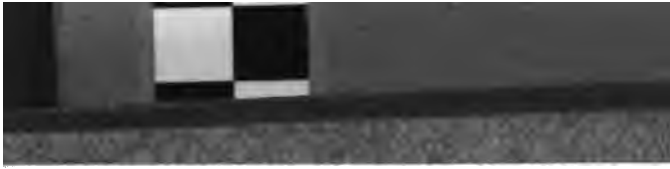


Again, let us suppose that we have an elongated space to fill, and that the subject is a "fugitive escaping." Where ought we to place him on the canvas? If we place him in the middle, he will look too much like a professional runner doing his ten miles within the hour, and we should feel inclined to pull out our watches and time him. Supposing him to be running from right to left, if we place him near the right side of the picture we shall not know whether his pursuers are not close at hand, and as our sympathies are always with the fugitive, whether he be a prisoner of war, a convict, or a fox, we should be glad to see him safe over to the other side of the picture.

If we place him near the left edge our wish is gratified. There is now the whole width of the picture intervening between him and any sign of pursuit, and we feel naturally, though perhaps illogically, that he has a better chance of escape.

The word "artful" has come to signify cunning, and is always taken in a bad sense, but I suppose that originally it meant literally "full of art," full of that curious compound of observation, good-sense, and poetic feeling which is so noticeable in Raffaele, Poussin, and all the great masters of composition.

In the examples I have given you there has always been some good reason for placing the figures on one side of the picture, but where no good reason exists, it ought not to be done.



It may not be out of place here to say something about the size of the figures in proportion to the canvas. This is a very important element in the composition of a picture, and many a good and careful work has been spoiled by the figures being either too large or too small for the canvas.

In these days, when the general destination of pictures is to decorate dining-rooms or to fill small galleries, space ought to be economized. We should avoid, as a rule, large areas of background; but, on the other hand, when the figures are too large for the canvas the effect is very unpleasant. An erect figure with the head bent down should have space enough above it to allow of the head being raised, otherwise the figure has an uncomfortable look, as if she could not lift up her head without rapping it against the frame.



Indeed all stooping, sitting, or kneeling figures should have space enough allowed them to stand up in. They should not, in short, look as if they had been put into those attitudes in order to pack them into the picture.

The mannerism of introducing figures too large for the canvas originated probably with the old Ger-



man masters of the Albert Durer school. With them, however, it was not a mannerism but a habit contracted by wood-engraving.

In those early days the graving tools were very rude and coarse ; moreover, the blocks were small, hence it became imperative to design the figures as large as possible ; and the habit thus acquired spread to drawings and pictures.

When, on the other hand, the figures are too small, the picture generally looks stagey, as if the artist had taken his composition from some genteel comedy-scene at a theatre. Cases frequently occur where it is desirable to keep the figures small, as in a caravan march across the desert, or in a procession moving down a cathedral nave.

In the one case it is desirable to give an idea of the boundless waste of sand, and in the other the architecture of the cathedral is probably more interesting than the individual action of the priests composing the procession, and therefore the figures should be very small for the canvas.

As to the *actual* dimensions of the figures in historical or "genre" subjects, there is only one size which I think objectionable, and that is rather smaller than life. Figures of four and a half or five feet high seldom look well. Half life-size, or rather more, is a very good proportion, and any size below this, down to the microscopic figures of Breughel or Meissonnier, is equally good.



In my former lectures on composition, I gave you several examples of the kind of mental analysis which ought to be brought to bear on every subject you wish to design. It will, I think, be unnecessary to go through all this again, as you are, I trust, more skilled in the art of composition than you were five years ago.

Nevertheless it may not be unprofitable to some of you, if I work out again one or two of my old subjects. One of the themes I selected was from Exodus :—

“ When Moses was grown, he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens, and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, and he looked this way, and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian.”

The subject to be the first part of the quotation, that is, where Moses is watching the Egyptian smiting the Hebrew.

Very well. Now there are two distinct centres of interest in this subject. One is the brutal treatment of the Hebrew by his taskmaster, and the other is the indignation of Moses. Under any circumstances, it would be advisable to sacrifice one of those centres of interest to the other ; but the context absolutely prohibits all idea of uniting the three figures together in one group. Moses was certainly not visible to the two men. We must, therefore, allow a considerable space between the figures, and the question now arises : Which is to be our foreground group ?



Either mode of treatment seems to me equally good, but supposing I fancy making the Moses the principal figure in the picture, how am I to express what is passing in his mind? The other two figures will be in violent action, therefore it will be well to represent Moses in a quiet attitude, but with an expression of concentrated indignation about him.

I just hastily sketch an erect figure (any indication of a human figure will do) to represent Moses. I have some ideas floating in my mind about making him clutching at his dagger, and about the expression I will throw into his eyes, and so on; but, for the present, I leave all this alone, and occupy myself with the general arrangement of the picture.

I find that with my erect figure of Moses, it will be better to make the picture an upright one, and it will be necessary to make him in hiding, or partly concealed by some building, otherwise he would be in full view of the Egyptian, and I should not be in keeping with the word "spied" of the text. I, therefore, put in a line or two to represent a building behind which he might be hiding.

Now for the two men. I don't at present elaborate the group at all.

I think the most natural reading is to suppose the Israelite on the ground, having fallen under his burden, and the Egyptian standing over him, and beating him; but for the present, I make a kind of scrawl which might mean any thing. I do not quite like



the place I have put it in ; I rub it out, and shift it. I am better pleased with the place now, but the group looks too large ; I rub it out again, and make it smaller. Now I find the Moses is not quite in his right place, I shift *him* about until I get him right ; and here let me point out the great advantage of a rough indication at first. Had I drawn my principal figure carefully, with all the expression I meant to convey, I should have hesitated about rubbing him out, and my composition would eventually have suffered.

Designing a subject is like drawing a figure. In figure-drawing you do not begin (at least you ought not) with sketching the eyes, nose, and mouth. It is sheer waste of time to do so, as the chances are ten to one in favor of your having to shift the head or to alter its inclination. You make a simple oval with a line down the centre to indicate the inclination, and then you go on with the rest of the figure. If you have to change the head, you can do so in two or three strokes. The same method applies to the hands and feet. Students will often draw the fingers and toes, and when the master comes round he finds that the hands and feet are in their wrong places, and the work has to be done again. Never begin the detail of a figure until you feel sure that every thing is in its right place, and that the general proportions are correct. In the same way, in composition never begin to elaborate the figures until you



feel sure that your groups are in their right places and of the proper size.

To return to our subject. I will suppose now that I have got my figures where I want them to be. I can go ahead now in all confidence. I can try various attitudes for my striking and prostrate figures. I can try different modes of giving to Moses the kind of expression I wish him to have. I stick to the ground plan of my design, and also to the general features of the arrangement, but I select my details as I go on.

Now let us suppose that I have elected to take the other view of the subject. In this case the picture would be reversed; that is, the struggling figures would be in the foreground, and the Moses behind. I proceed always in the same manner. I make a very rough indication of my two figures, an indication which need not define either arms, bodies, or legs, but which gives me an approximate idea of the size and general shape of the group. This being done, it remains to place the Moses. It is clear I must not put him very far off, or his action and expression would be lost. On the other hand, I must not place him very near, or the interest would be equally divided between him and the other figures.

I might perhaps, by merely introducing his head with a pair of angry eyes glaring at the Egyptian, do something which would be original and telling; and in this case, with the head only seen, he might be



quite close to the struggling group. All these different versions of the subject should be carefully considered before I finally adopt any one of them ; but when once I have made my choice, I ought to stick to it. There will be plenty of modifications to carry out in the individual action of the figures without again disturbing the general arrangement of the picture.

Another of my old illustrations of the reasoning an artist ought to bring to bear on his subject, was "The Return of a Crusader." Now here the first question which suggests itself is: Where shall we place our returning warrior? On the road, catching a first glimpse of his home? on his threshold? or fairly inside his house and surrounded by his family?

Something may be said in favor of all three readings, but if we place him at a distance on the road he will be alone, or at best accompanied only by a retainer or two, and we shall lose the best and most pathetic element in the subject.

If we place him inside the house and surrounded by his family, we shall certainly avoid the objection to the first treatment, but I think that the best moment to choose is when he has just crossed his threshold, with the open door behind him.

Admitting that we place him here, our first and most obvious idea would be to make him the centre of a group, his wife clinging to his neck, his children to his legs, his old dog licking his hand,



and the ancient retainer blubbing for joy in a corner. On second thoughts, however, it might strike us that this treatment would be a little theatrical; it would savor too much of the *tableau vivant*. Could not something more true to nature (and therefore better) be devised?

Let us remember that our crusader has not been away for merely a month or two on a foraging expedition; he has been away for years. The boy he left has become a young man; the infant a young girl, and she, of course does not remember him at all. Time and the sun of Palestine have also changed *him* greatly; his ruddy British complexion has vanished, his hair is grizzled, his polished armor is rusty, and hardly holds together.

Then again his arrival is totally unexpected. He has not (as a more modern warrior would have done) telegraphed to his wife to expect him by the next train. All these causes tend to make it probable that on presenting himself on his own threshold, there would be a short period of uncertainty, of suspense, and of hope in the air, before he would be fully recognized. With the daylight at his back, his face would be in the shade, which would be an additional reason for his wife not rushing into his arms at once. Her face would, of course, be in the full light, and ought to express a yearning, eager hope. This expression would be difficult to depict, but all emotional expressions which are not downright sensational *are* difficult.



It is very likely that in this, as in the other example I have given you, I might, when I came to the actual execution of the picture, adopt a different moment of time and a different treatment to the one which at present seems best to me.

My object in giving you these illustrations is not so much to recommend this or that particular mode of treatment, as to show you how you ought to examine a subject from every point of view before committing yourselves to one particular reading.

In the prize for design which is associated with my name, I purposely gave a whole day (or one third of the time allowed) for the competitors to examine the subject in all its aspects, so as not to commit themselves hurriedly to a treatment of which they might repent when it was too late. For finished pictures, taking three months to paint, one third of the time would be too large a proportion to spend in making up one's mind about the general arrangement; but even in this case I think that more time might often be advantageously devoted to the design and less to the execution than is generally done.

I cannot refer to these sketches without expressing my great satisfaction at the progress made within a very few years. Some of you probably recollect the first competition, and will doubtless agree with me that not only are the prize sketches greatly superior to those of the first year or two, but the general average is also very much higher.

Now I don't suppose that (taking the average) you are a much cleverer set of students than your predecessors of six years ago, and therefore the marked improvement of which I have been speaking is due entirely to your attention having been drawn to the very important, and I may add attractive, study of composition.

Although a great advocate for this study, I cannot say I approve of sketching clubs as usually constituted. Experienced painters may perhaps join them with impunity ; their evening's contribution is always a faint echo of something they have done fifty times before, but no good can come of any young artist cudgelling his brains to produce something original in two hours.

I don't think a professor of music would approve of his pupils meeting once a fortnight to improvise something on a given subject.

The result would be a farrago of stolen melodies and borrowed passages which could not lead to any good. He who had the best memory and the cleverest execution would carry off the honors of the evening.

The original genius, if there happened to be one present, would be nowhere.

The same kind of thing would happen in a sketching club ; the thoughtful and fastidious members would become discouraged, and perhaps give up composition altogether.



I think that friendly artistic gatherings are not only very enjoyable but very useful. A man who systematically keeps aloof from all his colleagues, generally deteriorates; but the object of these gatherings should be the interchange of ideas, and not the production of crude, hasty sketches.

An historical or figure painter ought, in addition to his knowledge of the human frame, to study the connection between mind and expression, and to steer a middle course between the facial monotony of Giotto, Orcagna, and the early masters, and the grotesque grimacing of the Mantegna school. The works of Lebrun and Lavater on facial expression are ridiculous and useless; indeed, nature is the only book we ought to consult if we wish truly to depict the effects of anger, fear, love, and all the other human passions. Instead, therefore, of extending my observations in this direction, I will return to the proper object of my lecture and give you a few more hints about the arrangement of a picture.

Many artists, in designing historical or what I call historical incident pictures, prefer oblique to parallel perspective. There are reasons for and against this practice, and I am far from condemning oblique perspective in every case; but I think that, speaking generally, the simpler method is preferable. Oblique perspective has the merit of being more picturesque and less formal; but, on the other hand, it is less easily understood, and although perfectly correct, often gives a figure-picture a lop-sided look.



In every picture, the horizon should be either above or below the centre of the canvas, and not bisect it into two equal portions. This is evident enough in landscape-painting, but the reasons for observing this rule in figure-pictures (particularly in those where the scene is the interior of a room, and no horizon is visible) are not so obvious.

Practically, however, it will almost always be found desirable to place the horizon considerably below the centre.

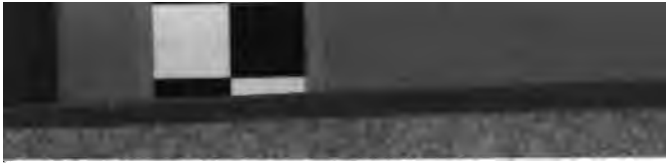
Similarly the point of sight (which in parallel perspective would, of course, coincide with the vanishing point) should not be in the centre of the picture, unless, indeed, the subject happens to be one of the severest kind.

It should be nearest to that side of the picture from which the light comes.

Suppose the figures in a picture to be lighted from the left of the spectator, and that the picture is hung in its proper light. You would not stand exactly opposite the centre of the canvas to get a good view. You would naturally place yourself a little on the side whence the light comes. Hence it is desirable that the point of sight should also be on that side.

Where the perspective is parallel, the eye is not at all shocked when the point of sight is fairly out of the picture.

Indeed, in pictures which represent a small area,

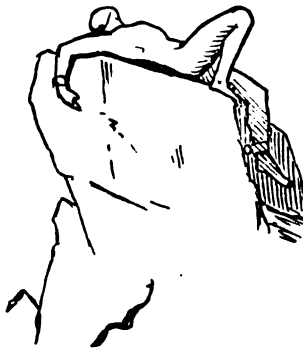


the effect is more agreeable when the lines converge toward a point outside.

In the determination of all these points, as also in settling the height of your horizon, you must allow yourselves to be guided by the nature of your subject.

What is right in one case is wrong in another.

In a "Prometheus Bound" you might with great propriety place your horizon below the picture altogether. Here, quite at the bottom of the canvas, you see the peaks of high mountains; the real horizon would therefore be a long distance below.



It would not be impossible to suggest subjects where the horizon should be above the picture, but I have probably said enough to show that exceptional subjects must be exceptionally dealt with.

Beginners (when they have a subject of several figures to paint) will often find it of great assistance to make a small clay model of the whole design, and to clothe their little figures with rags of different shades, until they get an effect which they think will do. The figures would be mere rough clay sketches, just enough to give an idea of the proportions and attitudes. The rags should be wetted



with clay water, and then the folds when dry will become quite stiff, so that the figures can be moved about without disturbing the arrangement of drapery.

This plan is particularly applicable whenever the scene of the picture is a confined room or cell, with a strong concentrated light.

Over the board on which your little figures are standing, you put an empty box or packing case, and you cut a hole in the side of the case, to represent the window. If you find the light on your group too concentrated, you can enlarge the hole, or cut a small aperture on the opposite side, so as to diffuse the light. In lamp or fire-lit subjects, this "maquette" method is most valuable. You admit no daylight into the box, but you place a small lamp or night-light wherever you wish the fire to be, and you have nothing to do but to copy the effect.

You must, of course, bore a small spy-hole at the point of sight.

In my early days in Paris, when *pictures* were painted, and not single figures for the market, almost every young artist had his little puppet-show, into which he was continually peeping during the progress of his work. Some of the pictures thus painted were badly composed, some were clumsily executed, some were crude in color, but all had a truthful look about them as far as light and shade were concerned.



The real shadows, the reflected light, and the half-tones were all in their right places and of the right value.

When a man has been painting pictures for twenty or thirty years, he knows pretty well what his effect ought to be under certain conditions. He knows when he may venture to copy the effect of light on the model before him, and when he must depart from it, but the beginner has no experience to guide him, and I would strongly recommend him to try the little clay figures. The whole group of say ten figures could be modelled in two days. The legs of those which are to be clothed in flowing drapery need, of course, not be indicated at all, and the roughest approximation to nature in the attitudes is all that is necessary, provided effect *only* is wanted. Of course, if you wish to study *drapery* from your small figures, you will have to elaborate them with greater care, and probably have to make them larger than would be convenient for the other purpose.

Another advantage of pursuing this method is that it gives a little practice in modelling, and I think that every figure-painter ought to be able to give expression to his ideas in clay just as well as on canvas. There is no necessity for his learning to work out detail in the clay ; he need never model nose, eyes, or mouth, and still less fingers and toes, but he ought to be able to give proportion and action to a small clay figure, just as easily as he would sketch with charcoal on a sheet of paper.



Before I have done with my little clay figures, I think it right to caution you against relying too implicitly on the effects of light and shade of your miniature figures. They are intended to serve as aids, but not as models to be servilely copied. When copied too closely, the shades are generally too black, and there is an absence of half-tones, which gives rather a harsh look to the picture.

An ingenious fellow-student of mine improved on the method by rigging up a light semi-transparent canvas box instead of the wooden one. He cut the usual opening to admit the light, and the canvas sides of the box let in just daylight enough to take away all unnatural blackness from the shadows. It may be asked : Why have a box at all ? Why not model the little figures, clothe them, and put them on your studio table ? In the first place, the light you require for your picture may be dissimilar to the light of your studio ; and, secondly, one of the principal advantages of the box system is that the sides of the box represent the sides of the hall or room of the picture, so that you see at a glance how the shadows of the groups are cast, you see which portions of the figures stand out dark, and which light, against the background. In short, you get a much more complete idea of what you propose painting than you could possibly manage in any other way.

For out-of-door subjects, where the light ought to be generally diffused, this method is altogether inap-



plicable, but for any prison, catacomb, or cloister scene, it will be found extremely useful.

In a composition of several figures, you will, after arranging your groups, often find large portions of the ground or floor space unoccupied. Don't be in a hurry to fill up these spaces with unmeaning accessories. They are sometimes most valuable, as giving rest to the eye, and ought often to be preserved. At any rate, they ought never to be filled up promiscuously with objects which do not assist in telling the story.

I remember when I was a student we had a stop-gap always ready in the shape of a pot of some sort or other. If Joseph was being sold by his brethren, and there was an awkward corner in the foreground, we would put in a water-pot. The Egyptian merchants who bought him would be sure to carry large pots with them. If Æneas was escaping from Troy with his father on his back, there would certainly be a large amphora in the corner, supposed to be too heavy for him to carry. The captive Jews could not wail by the waters of Babylon without a whole set of pots occupying the nooks and corners of the composition.

Now, an Oriental water-jar or an Etruscan vase may be beautiful objects and nice things to paint, but this is no reason why they should be invariably used as stop-gaps. In a subject like Hagar in the desert, the empty water-bottle is an essential ele-



ment in the story ; or again, in Rebecca at the well, you may paint pots to your heart's content, but in subjects where they are out of place it is best to refrain if you possibly can. All stop-gaps are very objectionable ; and if I mention this particular kind, it is because it is the one usually resorted to. I do not by any means wish to imply that you are to leave a disagreeable vacant corner unoccupied, but whatever you put in it, whether it be some cast-off cloak, fruit, or flowers, dog or cat, or even the irrepressible jar, it ought not to look as if it had been purposely put there to fill up a hole. Doubtless it *would* be put there with that intention, but the artifice ought not to be readily detected.

My main object to-night has been to impress upon you that in designing figure-subjects you are not to take the first commonplace ideas which may occur to you, but to reason your subject out, and select whatever treatment you think most telling.

By so doing, you are on the only true high-road to originality.

There is a kind of originality, or rather eccentricity, which may be easily enough attained by ignoring the natural laws of action, of light, and of color ; but I am speaking of originality united with excellence. This, I am convinced, is seldom (if ever) attained by sitting idle and waiting for some happy thought to turn up. You must use your brains constantly, from the first charcoal sketch down to the finishing-touches on the Exhibition walls.



Before closing this course of lectures, I should wish to disclaim any desire of imposing my individual opinions upon any of you. Like every one who has thought a good deal about painting and painters, I have formed my own ideas, and have, I think, expressed them pretty freely; but it would be quite contrary to my theory of free thought in art that you should accept as proven all the opinions I have expressed. Art (as I have already observed) is not a science. I cannot take up the white chalk and prove to you by $x + y$ that my views are right and all others wrong. What would become of our friends the critics, if this could be done?

But although all assertions on art must be mere expressions of individual opinion, it appears to me that the professor of such a many-sided art as painting is better employed in giving his honest convictions (whether they coincide or not with the prevalent opinion of the day) than in prudently confining himself to dry history or hazy æsthetics.

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THE END.



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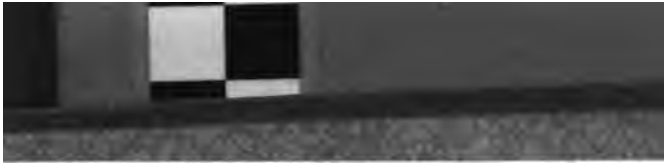
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